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[AN UNEXPECTED PILOT.]

THE ENCHANTRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Village Diogenes," "The Tambourine Girl," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE dreamy Italian twilight had succeeded the golden splendour of a glorious sunset, and was fast deepening over the beautiful bay of Naples, with its fairy-like isles, the delightful city beyond, and the adjacent volcano, looming up in weird grandeur, and with fierce lava torrents throbbing in its fiery heart. Here and there, on remote portions of the beach, groups of Neapolitan peasant women might be seen reclining on the sands, watching the fishermen as they drew in their nets, preparatory to returning to their humble homes, while dark-eyed children laved their brown feet in the waters, or with dimpled hands gathered particoloured pebbles and feathery sprays from the great garden of the sea.

Three Turkish sailors, with turbaned heads and gay caftans, had just landed, and after pausing a few moments to watch the quaint feats of an eastern juggler, had passed on to the spot where a young improvisatrice stood leaning over an antique harp, purporting to have been brought from some storied, old palazzo. There was something very striking and picturesque in her whole appearance; the attitude of her lithe figure was full of careless grace; the peasant costume she wore, with the long veil floating back on the breeze that rippled the waters, and the sweet voice, with which she was breathing out the wild improvisations, all combined to make her a most charming object, and many a passer-by turned from the noisy tambourine-girl, to drop shining coins into the cap of her blind brother, crouched on the pier. A dashing muleteer, with his heavy panniers crowded with the rich fruits of the south—oranges, figs, and pomegranates, glowing like a maiden's cheek, and rare grapes, which had grown purple beneath an Italian

sunshine, stood amid this party, shouting out the names and excellence of his wares, and now and then casting an admiring glance at the gay girl, with her laced boddico, and the laughing black eyes gleaming beneath her jaunty hat, trilling barcarolles, and rattling her tambourine, endeavouring, as they all were, to make the most of the few brief moments, ere evening dusk should settle over sea and shore. The chief interest, however, seemed to centre in a crowd gathered on the pier—an assemblage of the Neapolitan nobility, in gala-dress, gazing at the beautiful yacht, which now came gliding over the bay like a sea-bird skimming the wave.

Ere long the huge anchor went plunging down into the purple waters, and the next moment a graceful figure tripped across the deck, and pausing, gazed anxiously towards the pier.

"Look, look!" exclaimed a voice among the crowd, "that is Lady Ginevra herself, safely returned from her long sea voyage, give her a cheer of welcome—three times three for the beautiful belle of Naples!" and all eyes were now turned eagerly towards the speaker, a young man, who, as he spoke, moved to a portion of the pier, which had through his care been carpeted with crimson velvet, for a certain pair of dainty feet to tread.

Lifting his hat he waved it round and round his head in wild enthusiasm; his example was at once followed, and cheer upon cheer went ringing up to the tranquil sky, while through the deepening dusk, the fair lady on board the yacht was seen to wave a white kerchief in acknowledgment of the flattering welcome.

"My lord," said a stately dame, approaching the gentleman to whom we have alluded, "I suppose this is a happy hour to you?"

"It is in truth; you cannot at all wonder if I am all impatience to meet the lady, whose absence on a summer's cruise over the Mediterranean seems like an age to me."

In another instant he had sprung into a barge that

had just drawn up at the pier, a craft which, with its rare carving and purple cushions, seemed gorgeous enough for a state-barge.

"Bend to your oars, my men!" cried the young nobleman, imperiously, to the two boatmen, and he moved towards the stern of the boat, bearing a bouquet of the choicest flowers—the rare blossoms of Italia, and those which beam and brighten beneath the tropical skies.

As he approached the yacht, he placed the bouquet on the cushions with extreme care, adjusted his own rich costume, and then took up an elaborately inlaid guitar, and commenced the sweet prelude of an Italian love song. Ere long the melody melted over the rippling bay, and stole into the beautiful yacht, to which we have before referred. Such was the young noble's welcome to his ladylove. Within the cabin, the soft radiance which gleamed through alabaster lamps had succeeded the dusky twilight outside, and there sat the noble owner, his only child and his young ward. The yacht, which had been christened *Hesper* by his fair daughter, had been built at great cost, and on this cabin the Comte di Montaldi had lavished luxuries, which might have graced the bower-room of a sultana. The floor was paved with rare mosaic, and the rugs, gracefully arranged here and there, had glowed gorgeously in their Tyrian purple, crimson, gold, and blue, as the sunset light burned through the cabin windows, seeming to match the rich clouds drifting to and fro, or canopied, like some grand tent, pitched for a royal sleeper. The architecture was delicate enough to have belonged to some fairy place; the white pillars had the most exquisite devices that could possibly be imagined—carved tropical lilies, with their long leaves, clustered grapes, graceful designs of sea-weed and Egyptian lotus, so perfect that they only needed colour and fragrance to make them seem real. Choice statuettes stood in white, still groups, or rising solitary in their chiselled beauty, looped back folds of luxurious drapery, and held in their marble hands fanciful baskets and

urns, in which delicious pastilles were burning, while the air was heavy with their fragrance. Delicately carved brackets supported costly vases of frosted silver, bronze, and malachite: on a table brought from the Orient, might have been seen two open workboxes, glittering with gold, silver, and mother-of-pearl; copies of the Italian poets in elegant bindings, and those thousand graceful trifles, which women of refined taste, with wealth to gratify it, love to gather in their haunts. The sofas and chairs were cushioned with garnet-coloured velvet, and the wood-work was as rich in carving as the other adornments of the cabin. In the midst of all this splendour, the Comte Raolfo and his companions were sitting, when the young noble's song came floating up from the bay. For a moment the two listened in silence, and then the father exclaimed:

"Hut! what is that?"

"I fancy," said his ward, casting an arch smile at her friend, "it is the young Lord Vittorio; he has so often chanted serenades beneath a certain window in your palazzo that his voice has grown familiar."

"Aye, a lover's welcome," replied the noble. "I will go on deck and ask him to come on board."

Leaving them for an instant, we will now glance back at the pier.

"Friends!" exclaimed an elderly gentleman, as the young lover's barge went dancing over the waves, "will you stand idly by, and give this Lord Vittorio a fair field for such a conquest? It was not so in my time. I most assuredly should have entered the lists, and thrown down my gauntlet."

A gay laugh echoed out on the passing breeze, and a deep-toned voice rejoined:

"Mark ye—I, at least, shall assert my claim, and go to welcome the star of Naples."

And a graceful and costly barge, of most poetic design and elaborate workmanship, and a decided rival to Lord Vittorio's, shot past the crowd on the pier, and cleft its way towards the yacht.

The full moon had now risen in white splendour above the waters, and its glorious light bathed the beautiful bay, the islands lying like rich jewels on its surface, the sails of the vessels anchored in the harbour, and the jaunty yacht; it quivered over the olive and orange trees, lit up the old convents perched on the neighbouring hill-tops, and glamed over the palaces and churches, the spires, domes, and towers of fair Naples.

Across the moonlit bay the rival nobleman's barge glided almost with the speed of wings, and as he came alongside the yacht, knowing the Comtesse Ginevra's preference among musical instruments, he had brought from Granada a lute, and he now breathed out a Moorish serenade, full of melting sweetness.

"There is another song of welcome," said Beatrice, Montaldi's charming ward.

And the watchful father once more went on deck. Meanwhile, Vittorio di Castinelli, who had been most cordially received by the owner of the yacht, entered the cabin, and sinking at Ginevra's feet, exclaimed:

"A thousand, thousand welcomes, *cavissima*! I have scarcely existed in your absence! Ah, how the hours have dragged on, but now I shall once more live!"

And he lifted her white, jewelled hand to his lips.

"Rise, my lord," replied the girl, "your language is extravagant."

But the crimson did not deepen on her cheek, as if her young heart bounded at his words, her eyes did not kindle, her lips did not quiver.

Castinelli rose, and seating himself at her side, offered the bouquet, declaring that the flowers had been selected, not only because he thought such beauty as hers merited the richest and rarest, but also on account of the sentiment they breathed.

The lady answered only with the merest courtesy, but he attributed it to girlish timidity, and kept up his murmured compliments.

We will now return to Raolfo di Montaldi, who had again hastened on deck. As he leaned over the railing, he perceived the other boat and its occupants. Lord Vittorio's rival was equally as eligible a match as the young man already within the cabin. Both belonged to dual families, and wore heirs to broad acres, and well-filled coffers. The shrewd father's choice lay between these two, and he therefore deemed it politic to treat them with similar attention.

Ginevra and Lord Filippo had been friends in childhood, but for a few years past, his duties at a celebrated university, and foreign travel, had occupied most of his time. As he moved into the cabin, Ginevra's beautiful face lighted up with real pleasure at meeting him again; but when he would fain have recalled to her memory his boyish words of one day claiming her as his bride, she looked perplexed, and replied, in a low tone:

"That was childish talk."

A banquet was soon prepared on board the yacht, and amid the splendour of silver, Sévres, and glass, delicate as frost-work, the party gathered around the host's festal board. During the entertainment of the rival noblemen, heavy clouds had gathered in the sky, which had been so fair, so glorious at sunset, twilight, and moonrise.

The wind swept through the streets of Naples, now howling with mad fury, and now dying away like the moaning of a homeless child; it tossed the boughs of olive, pine, and cypress, and the waters of the bay came breaking wildly against the pier, and dashed in sullen surges over the sands, where the peasant woman had reclined at twilight, like the tramp, tramp, tramp of an advancing army. The thunder occasionally muttered wrathfully in the distance, and the lightning ever and anon traced its red hieroglyphics with a pen of fire over the gloomy clouds.

As the party ascended the staircase leading up the companion-way, and gained the deck of the yacht, hasty exclamations flew from lip to lip, like wildfire, and Filippo di Visconti exclaimed:

"I had hoped to have the pleasure of escorting my old friend to the shore, but since this sudden and ominous change has transformed sea and sky, I shall leave it to her and her father to decide the matter."

"For my own part," rejoined the host, "business of importance requires that I should reach Naples to-night; but I would not for worlds expose my only child to danger, and, besides, I promised my ward's father on his death-bed that I would deal most tenderly by his treasure. I will, therefore, leave it to the young ladies to settle the question."

"As for me," replied Ginevra, "I think we had better go on shore. I am very, very anxious to be at home again."

And now memories of the old ancestral palace, and one who had grown strangely dear to her, came floating through her brain. To her extreme satisfaction, Beatrice coincided in her view of the matter. Both the young nobles, however, declared that they feared the ladies might have cause to regret their decision, but their objections were overruled by their fair opponents, who asserted that they had grown brave in their summer cruise, during which they had encountered fiercer tempests than that then raging.

"But," observed Castinelli, "you must have been in the yacht, managed by skilful sailors."

Ginevra shook her head disavowingly, and rejoined:

"Not so, my lord; for once we were overtaken by a tempest when we had gone forth to sketch an island in the Mediterranean, which I thought peculiarly picturesque; and again, when we went ashore to dine at a villa, with whose owner my father had some acquaintance—there was a heavy sea, but we reached the yacht in safety. I have no fears."

"Then no time must be lost," said Visconti, handing Ginevra into his barge, with the air of a man who is wont to have his own way, and Vittorio di Castinelli, with the best grace he could assume, assisted the Lady Beatrice into his own boat.

The owner of the yacht would fain have called some of his own sailors to the aid of the two barges, but all save three had already gone on shore, and these were foreign seamen, taken on board during the cruise, and knew nothing of the bay where they had cast anchor.

Castinelli's boatmen rowed for a time as well as their fears would allow them, and the same might be said of those belonging to Visconti's barge; but a huge billow came dashing over them, extinguishing the torches, which had been provided by the comte, and our party were left in darkness, save when the lightning lit up the yawning, foam-crested waters.

While these events were transpiring, the servants in the old palazzo at Naples had been awaiting the arrival of their master and his family. A sumptuous repast had been provided in the lofty, frescoed, banquet-hall, but the festive board still remained in solitary state.

It had been reported to the steward that his master's yacht had been anchored in the bay at twilight, but rumour had also brought the tidings that two young nobles had gone out to welcome the returning lady, whose beauty, grace, and accomplishments made her the star of Naples.

When the tempest had clouded the sky and ruffled the bay, which had been so tranquil on their arrival, the old servant began to grow anxious; he was in no enviable mood, when the porter flung open the door to admit a young man of noble presence. His figure was tall and commanding; his head finely developed; his dark hair swept back from a high, pale brow, where genius sat enthroned, while his large, dark, poetic eyes, which could grow dreamy and tender, or flash like a falcon's, lent a singular charm to his whole face.

After hasty greetings had been exchanged between the steward and the visitant, the gentlemen asked:

"Pray, has your master's family arrived?"

"Not yet, not yet," replied the old man, gravely, and he proceeded to relate the circumstances which had probably detained the Comte Raolfo, his ward, and daughter on board the yacht.

The young man listened with deep interest, and then said:

"I think I will go down to the pier, and endeavour to ascertain whether they are attempting to gain the shore," and striding through the vestibule, he hastened to the pier.

The rain now fell in torrents, and when the young man reached his destination, he perceived a group of fishermen, who had just landed, bearing aloft several torches, by whose lurid glare, as well as by the light of a lantern carried by one of the party, he gazed yearningly out at the tempest-tossed bay.

"Is there not some barque buffeting the waves?" he asked, addressing the fishermen.

"Ay, ay!" was the quick reply. "there it is, away to leeward, and something that looks like a pleasure-barge, too!"

At this instant there was a transient lull in the weird music of the warring winds, and the young man distinctly heard a lady's shriek ringing pitiously over the waters.

"'Tis Ginevra," was the thought that for a moment chilled the blood in his veins, and then turning to the fisherman who had answered his query, he said: "Give me your boat. I will pay you well for the use of it!" and he laid a coin in the hard, rough hand of the fisher.

"You can have the boat," rejoined the man, and glancing up into the stranger's face, he added, "in my duty to warn you, signor, if you go on such a mad-cap errand, I fear I shall find you dead on the sands to-morrow. I have been a fisherman in your bay for fifteen years, and never but thrice in that time have I seen so rough a sea."

"I thank you for your consideration," observed the young man, "but from my earliest boyhood, I have been accustomed to the sea. I can row as well as any of you fishers, and that boiling bay does not intimidate me, when I think of human life in peril!"

"I see," said the fisher, "you vain to try to shake your purpose, and as it is I will try to console myself by thinking that this boat is as staunch a little craft as ever weathered a storm. Go, and the saints preserve you!"

The young man's heart breathed a fervent response to the fisher's wish, not for his own sake so much as for her who was now the dearest object in the wide world.

How long the boat, with three blazing torches and a lantern, which he had secured by lashing it firmly to his own person, went bounding over the wild waves.

The billows surged about him in mad fury, and yawned in fearful maelstroms; but the young man was an experienced boatman, and he kept bravely on.

Some of the torches were extinguished by the rain, and the spray which dashed over him; but the lantern burned steadily, and at length, by its light, he perceived a barge, with broken oars, drenched cushions, and shattered sides. Again his heart stood still with sudden dread.

"I fear I am too late to save her!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Ginevra! Ginevra!" and he glanced down into the seething waves, picturing to himself the white arm flung upwards in the last downward plunge into that black abyss; those unfathomed depths where the fantastic seaweed might weave a shroud for the beautiful dead, the coral gleam like a pale, funeral lamp, and old Ocean chant a perpetual requiem over the loved and lost. Suddenly, however, he once more heard a wild shriek ringing out in the blast with startling distinctness, and soon saw another barge, the boat belonging to Visconti, in which the adventurers had taken refuge after the wreck of Castinelli's.

By the light of his lantern and the single torch which remained burning, the young man saw the face of Ginevra gleaming out in white, statuesque beauty from her dishevelled black hair, drenched with rain and ocean spray, and the figure of Beatrice, clinging convulsively to her friend.

The affrighted boatmen's utmost efforts could scarcely keep this barge, overlaid as it was, from sharing the fate of Castinelli's, and neither of the young nobles appeared to be of much service, though Comte Raolfo seemed trying to encourage the whole company, and the gaze he fixed on his daughter was full of yearning tenderness.

As a third shriek rang out from Ginevra's white lips, the young man in the fisher's boat replied in a voice which sent a thrill of hope and delight through every nerve of the listening maidens.

"Take heart, ladies; with heaven's blessing I can save you!"

"Who is it?" asked Comte Raolfo.

"Signor Rosetti, *mia padra*," replied Ginevra, a burning flush crimsoning cheek, neck, and brow.

"Welcome, welcome!" cried her father, as the young artist's boat shot alongside, and then turning to the other nobles, he continued, "I believe we shall be saved; Rossetti is an experienced oarsman, a most skilful pilot; we can trust to his guidance!" and he extended his hand to the young man in cordial greeting.

In a brief time the ladies and the Comte Raolfo were lifted into the fisher's boat, and the barge, bearing the rival noblemen, and the hitherto desponding oarsmen, followed in the wake of Rossetti's craft.

"Lady," murmured the young artist, as he assisted Ginevra to a seat, "I did not think I should meet my long-absent pupil thus."

Had Raffaele Rossetti been the equal of that fair girl in wealth, and what the world calls rank, he might have talked as enthusiastically as those two young nobles, Visconti and Vittorio di Castinelli, the Italian "Beau Brummel," but the love which thrilled the artist's heart, and made that face the day-star of his dreams—dreams which only seemed to mock him with their illusive brightness, a glamour as deceitful as the mirage of the desert—must be repressed.

Tears gathered in those dark, changeable eyes uplifted to him for an instant, and this was then her only answer. Rossetti now removed his cloak, and wrapping it about the two ladies with womanly gentleness, again bent to his oars. The rain still came plashing down in chill torrents, and the fisher's boat plunged from wave to wave like a sea-bird. The barge followed, and at length the storm-beaten party reached the pier, where the old steward and several of the retainers of the family were waiting.

As Rossetti lifted the young comtessa from the boat, that beautiful face, now flushed and radiant, was once more uplifted to him, and a low, sweet voice said, earnestly:

"You are our good angel, signor; but for you, what would have been our fate?"

"Oh, lady, I shudder to think of it," replied the young man; "but I must not keep you waiting in such a tempest—at some future time I must hear how it all happened."

The whole company, from nobles to bargemen, were loud in their praises of the hero of the hour, and when Comte Raolfo gained the pier in safety, he again wrung the young man's hand convulsively, and said, in a voice which no effort could render firm:

"Rossetti, you have saved my child, my ward, myself, and my friends; be assured, I feel how deep are my obligations to you. How can I ever repay the debt?"

"My lord," replied the young man, "I wish no thanks. Good night. See, there is your carriage," and obeying an irresistible impulse, he handed the ladies into the vehicle, bowed with knightly courtesy, and turned away, a thousand tumultuous emotions throbbing in his heart.

As Rossetti left the pier, he moved onward at a rapid pace, pausing only for an instant to glance down the fine old street, where many of the Neapolitan nobility had their palace-homes, where stood the grand old residence of which that young enchantress Ginevra di Montaldi was a tenant; then he resumed his hasty walk, taking his way towards a quiet and unostentatious part of the city.

There were few people abroad on that night of storms, and this comparative solitude harmonised with his present mood. When he reached the door of his simple dwelling, the clusters of shrubbery which graced the little enclosure tossed violently in the fierce blast, and the ivy and blossoming vines trained over the walls shook, as if the pulses of his restless heart were vibrating through every leaf. But through the lattice a cheery light beamed, and as he opened the door, a young girl, who might have counted seventeen summers, came gliding into the corridor. Rossetti stooped to kiss her red lips, and then the girl said:

"How very, very late you are, brother mine; I was beginning to grow anxious, but where have you been all this time?"

The young man hesitated a few moments, but the girl exclaimed:

"Ah, you must not attempt to keep me in ignorance; besides, I began to suspect that you might be at Comte di Montaldi's. They were expected to return to-day, as you told me, and I fancied you might have gone there—am I not right?"

Rossetti bowed assent, and then, after a brief silence, gave an account of all those circumstances with which our readers are familiar.

"And you saved her!" said Aurora. "She and her proud father owe their lives to you!"

"Yes, and do you not see that if I were a scion of some old ducal line, I, too, might be a favoured lover?"

While he had been speaking the last sentence, he had led his sister into the little room she had left at his coming, and glancing round on its simple furniture, he continued, with bitter emphasis:

"Could I fit up a luxurious palace, and make myself the owner of broad lands—could I span Lady Ginevra's brow with the glittering coronet of a duchess, robe her graceful figure in the costliest fabrics, and circle her white neck and arms with diamonds, pearls, and rubies, the haughty comte might smile on my suit as he does on the homage of Visconti and Castinelli."

He paused a moment, and then continued:

"And yet, Aurora, I love her a thousand-fold better than they do. Oh, what a struggle it is to meet her as my pupil, to direct her art studies, and still feel that honour bids me seal my lips."

"Then why not give up the lessons?" queried the sister. "It is true her father pays you most generously, and has also purchased many of your pictures, but we could leave Naples and go elsewhere, and if patronage should fail, I could do what you will permit now—embroider to assist in gaining a livelihood."

The young man shook his head, and exclaimed:

"No, my sister, no; not yet can I abandon the instruction which has, I know, a too perilous sweetness. Before I leave you I must take a glance at little Constanza. Ah! I see the basket, and some of the grapes I sent her, with a fragrant, luscious orange still within reach of her little hand. Aurora, had I not executed her commission before this wild tumult seized me, I might have forgotten a brother's duty."

He then gave Aurora a second and yearning kiss, and muttered:

"To-night I shall have another conflict with destiny."

"Brother," replied the girl, "take courage; remember heaven does not bestow all good gifts upon one—you have genius, firm principles, and two dear sisters to love you."

The young man smiled momentarily; but the wakeful Aurora heard her brother, in his little chamber above, pacing to and fro all that long, weary night.

CHAPTER II.

MORNING dawned gloriously over that delightful bay, and the far-famed metropolis on its margin—the fair city, which is to the Neapolitan what Araby the Blest is to the Orientals, and whose numberless charms have given rise to the proud exclamation:

"Vedi Napoli e poi muori!" "See Naples, and die!"

When Rossetti went forth into the little enclosure in front of his humble dwelling, fierce winds no longer tossed the clustering shrubbery, and as he gazed up at the sky, he perceived that the storm-clouds had drifted away, like a routed army, and the far-off eastern horizon glowed like an altar-fire with the coming dawn.

For a time he stood in thoughtful silence, living over the events of the previous night, and then went back into the cottage. Aurora had risen, but the younger sister, Constanza, who had been very ill, and was now rapidly recovering, was still wrapped in tranquil slumber.

The elder sister looked earnestly up at the young artist, but the subject they had discussed on his return from the pier was not resumed.

Breakfast was scarcely over, when footsteps were heard approaching, and a servant in the Di Montaldi livery rapped at the low door.

Rossetti hastened to answer the summons, and the man said:

"My master directed me to bring home your cloak, signor, and give you this note."

And with a bow the speaker retired.

When the door had closed upon his retreating figure, the young artist opened the missive, and read its contents aloud. It ran as follows:

"DEAR ROSSETTI.—We are all suffering somewhat from our last night's exposure, but the physician apprehends nothing serious, and I hope ere long to have your instructions resumed in my family. Still, I cannot bear that the day should pass without an opportunity of again offering my warmest acknowledgments for the great service you have rendered me and mine, and as I am forbidden to leave the house for the present, I beg you to do me the favour to call at my palace as early as possible. Yours sincerely, RAOLFO DI MONTALDI."

"The note is most courteous," said Aurora, as he concluded. "Shall you go?"

"I told the comte last night that I wished no thanks," rejoined the young man; "but should I comply with his request, I may see her face at the window, or hear her voice, if nothing more—the temptation is strong. First, however, I will go into my studio, and try to grow more calm."

Two hours later, he once more entered the room, where his sister Constanza was feeding a pet bird, made some brotherly inquiries as to her welfare, and then went forth, and took his way towards the palace-home of the Comtessa Ginevra.

It was a stately old palazzo, with long colonnades,

massive arched portals, above which the family arms were emblazoned, lofty windows, rich in stained-glass, and quaint balconies, draped with trailing vines.

As Rossetti approached the palace, he saw at the casement of the studio, where he had usually given his lessons in art, the face of Ginevra, and, at sight of him, she bowed and smiled. A moment more, and he was ushered into the drawing-room, which, like the exterior of the palace, spoke of the olden time; the stuccoed ceiling, the panelled walls, the tessellated floor; the voluminous curtains of purple velvet, sweeping fold on fold from the heavy cornices, and lying in gorgeous masses beneath; the luxurious cushions heaped here and there; the antique ebony chairs, with their unique shapes and elaborate carving; the mosaic tables; the glittering lustre which lighted up the grand old room at evening, and the Venetian mirrors that reflected all this magnificence, formed a vivid contrast to the modern splendour of the cabin, where the young comtessa had received her two admirers the evening previous.

Montaldi did not keep his visitant long waiting, and, as he clasped Rossetti's hand, he said, with much emotion:

"Young man, had it not been for your gallant service, I fear my daughter would have perished. She is all I have in the wide world, and I love her most tenderly; she is the hope of my old age, and I shall then lean upon her and the husband she may choose, in my declining years. You have saved her, Rossetti; you may henceforth regard me as a sincere friend; I have influence here in Naples, and elsewhere in Italy, and I shall be happy to serve you and your interests. Whenever you need aid, you may command me!"

Had the young artist held a different position, he might have rejoined:

"My lord, I love your beautiful daughter; let the precious life I have saved be linked with mine. Let her, who is the day-star of my dreams, be the light of my home, the joy of my heart!"

But as it was, he only thanked the nobleman for his kind assurances, and entered into some conversation relative to the voyage from which Montaldi had just returned. Ginevra was, however, uppermost in his thoughts, and when he inquired whether the comtessa had made any sketches during her absence, the fond father said:

"You shall see for yourself, signor—she is in the studio, I think, and you will find her there."

Moving from the drawing-room, the artist ascended the quaint old staircase, and tapped lightly at the door of the studio.

"Enter," replied a low, sweet voice, and the next instant he stood before the young girl.

The studio was a fine old room, with dark, polished walls, chairs and couches, cushioned with green damask, two or three easels, and a profusion of busts and pictures—rare engravings, and sketches in oil and water colours.

The young comtessa had been reclining in a lounging-chair, but at Rossetti's entrance she rose, and the sunshine, beaming through her window, shone full upon her. How gloriously beautiful she was, with the grace of her figure, her superb head, balanced on the arching neck, the wealth of her glossy, purple-black tresses, the crystal clearness of her complexion, where you could trace the path of each blue vein, the delicately-chiselled lips, with their dewy brightness, and the large, dark, bowdlering eyes, with a thousand varying emotions painted in their dusky depths, like the cloud and sunshine of an April sky. The rounded cheek was deeply flushed with the feverish excitement of the previous evening, and there was a nervous tremor around the ruby mouth.

The young man gazed at her for a moment in silence, losing no detail of that dazzling beauty, or the luxurious vestments—the rich morning robe of crimson silk, the loose, Turkish sleeves floating back from the graceful arms, and the broad, white Indian scarf falling about her like the drapery of a statue, while her magnificent hair rippled away from her fair brow, and was gathered in a shining knot at the back of her head.

"Lady," he said, "I am most happy to learn that you are able to meet your friends to-day, for I feared serious consequences might ensue from your exposure to such a tempest."

As he spoke, he led his hostess to a seat, and then continued:

"Still, with that fever-flush on your cheek, and the weariness which must oppress you, perhaps it is not politic for you to grant even this brief interview."

"Indeed, signor," replied the young girl, "it is hard for me to be as much of an invalid as I am to-day; I cannot rest as Beatrice does."

There was a brief silence, and then the young man continued:

"Your father told me that you had taken some

sketches during your sea-voyage, and I came hither to beg the privilege of examining them."

The young girl smiled, as she replied:

"It is not pleasant, I assure you, to subject my rude sketches to your criticism; but you shall see them nevertheless."

She rang the bell, and a servant appeared.

"Theresa," said the lady to the attendant who now entered, "bring me my portfolio."

The mandate was obeyed, the sketches produced, and examined by the artist with deep interest. While Rossetti was thus busied, the comtessa proceeded to recount the circumstances connected with their return home; alluding to the crowd of their friends gathered on the pier; the two young nobles, who had sailed out to welcome them; their entertainment on board the yacht; the sudden change which had come over sea and sky; the fear of all the gentlemen, lest it might be most perilous to go ashore; and her own and her friend's decision of the matter.

"I realised how rash I was after it was too late to regain the yacht," she continued. "Oh, what an hour it was! I shall never, never forget it to my dying day."

"I too shall remember it, lady," replied the artist, glancing up at her beautiful face, which had grown as pale as when he had seen it gleaming white and statueque in Visconti's barge.

For a moment the temptation was strong upon him, to fling himself at her feet, and pour forth his absorbing love; but then the dark frowning walls rising between them loomed darkly up before him, and he gained the mastery over his wildly throbbing heart. The silence which ensued was at length broken by Ginevra, who said:

"And now let me ask about your sisters, signor—how have they fared in my absence?"

The young man hastened to reply, and when he alluded to Constanca's illness, that changeable face expressed the warmest sympathy, and then she resumed:

"I think I must endeavour to send her something to cheer her convalescence."

"You are very kind," exclaimed Rossetti, and then added: "I have now finished the examination of your sketches, and believe me, they do great credit to your artistic taste."

"And the skill of my master," observed the lady. At this juncture, the door unclosed, and the Comte di Montaldi appeared.

"Signor," he said, "I wish you had brought your portfolio."

"My lord," replied Rossetti, "I left it in the vestibule."

Theresa was despatched to bring it, and the young man exhibited its contents. Both Montaldi and his daughter were extravagant in their encomiums; but one, a view of a picturesque portion of the beautiful Isle of Ischia seemed to be the favourite.

"Signor Rossetti," said the comte, "I admire this so much, that I think my daughter must sketch it too. Some day, when she has recovered from last night's exposure and excitement, I beg you to take a boating excursion to Ischia, with your pupil."

"I should be only too glad to grant your request," replied the artist.

And now fancy conjured up before him a vision of the sunny bay; a light boat glancing over the rippling water, bearing him and Ginevra towards the fair isle; the golden hours of a long, bright, happy day, and then the moonlight sail homeward.

His heart was full of these musings, when he rose to take his leave, soon after this arrangement had been made, but as he descended the steps he saw Castinelli dismounting from his horse, in front of the old palace. A wild pang shot through his heart, and after he had listened to the young exquisite's thanks for his heroic deeds the evening previous, he stalked on, muttering:

"What madness—what folly it is for a poor artist to love a noble comtessa!"

Wherever he went memories of the beautiful, bewildering Ginevra haunted him; he recalled their first meeting, the hours when she had been his pupil, her changeable eyes, the sunshine of her smile, the music of her rippling laugh, the light step of her dainty foot, the witching grace of every movement. Love and duty were still struggling for the mastery when he returned to his lowly home. As he crossed the threshold little Constanca sprang towards him, full of childish delight.

"See, see," she cried, "your pupil, the comtessa, sent me this, and a little note, too."

The gift proved to be a costly book—a collection of fairy tales, illustrated with exquisite coloured prints. The note which accompanied it was written in a delicate Italian hand, and expressed the wish that the gift might afford Constanca half as much pleasure as the giver had experienced in bestowing it.

Rossetti gazed long at the note, his eyes dwelling on every character she had traced, the dainty enve-

lope, and the seal, with the family arms of Di Montaldi and the letter "G."

"Oh, is she not very, very kind?" cried Constanca.

"She is indeed."

And for a time he lapsed into a more genial mood. Seating the little convalescent on his knee, he turned over the leaves of the book, sharing her admiration of the prints, with which it was lavishly embellished, and when at length he read one of the stories, she listened in childish wonder. Two or three days later, Constanca received a flattering assurance that she was still remembered by her brother's high-born pupil, for a servant belonging to the comte's household, brought a second package for the invalid. Aurora hastened to open it, and disclosed a miniature workbox of tortoiseshell, with sewing implements of silver and ivory, delicate enough to have belonged to Titania, or some of her elfin maids of honour.

As time wore on, the comtessa proved that her interest in the Rossetti's family was lasting, and as soon as Constanca was able to leave the cottage Ginevra appropriated to her use a beautiful white pony, which she had ridden in her childhood. When the little invalid learned this she was wild with joy, and mounted on the pony, with its rich housings of blue and silver, she took delightful excursions; first through the streets of Naples, and then, as she gained strength, riding out into the beautiful environs of the city, always attended by a careful groom.

Meanwhile Visconti and Castinelli had not been idle. Each seemed to prosecute his suit with extreme earnestness, and brought into requisition all the arts by which they thought to win the peerless comtessa. Serenades were nightly sung beneath her window; rare bouquets, breathing the language of love, were daily brought to the old palazzo, and long conferences held with her father, while she was besieged with sonnets and letters, and when their names were announced by the porter, she felt certain another declaration was to be added to the many to which she had already listened.

A week, perhaps, after their return to Naples, the comte had entered his daughter's boudoir, and leaning over her chair, gazed down at her with fond pride, and said:

"My child, I wish to speak to you with regard to these two persistent lovers; you must have seen their devotion, and my choice out of all your admirers lies between Visconti and Castinelli. Both belong to dual families, and have wealth and power at their command; both have their personal attractions, and you cannot doubt their absorbing love. What think you, Ginevra?"

The girl hesitated a few moments, and then replied, gravely:

"The topic is not a pleasant one."

"And why?"

"Because neither of them have been able to inspire me with the love which I ought to feel for him who is to share my destiny."

"Strange, strange!" exclaimed the comte, "there are few ladies in the land who would not be proud and happy to accept either of these two nobles."

"Vittorio di Castinelli," rejoined the girl, "has been pronounced the handsomest young man in Naples; but as you are aware, I have no taste for fops."

"That may be a youthful folly, which will pass away as he grows older and wiser," observed her father. "At least, you should respect his love, and perhaps your influence might do much towards correcting his faults."

"I always respect an honest love," said the girl, "but when I marry it must be to a husband whom I can look up to with reverence."

"Well, then," rejoined the comte, "there is Visconti."

"In his boyhood his companionship was most agreeable, and now I regard him as a friend; but I do not see how he can ever fill a nearer—dearer relation."

"Ginevra," exclaimed Montaldi, "he told me that it had been the dream of his lifetime to win you for his bride. At the university, and during his foreign travels, your image has followed him, and when he returned and found you so much more beautiful than his fancy had pictured, his boyish admiration deepened into the love of manhood."

"I have confidence in his love," said the girl, "but do you think you could trust my happiness with him? His temper was violent when a boy, and I am certain he has not learned to govern it, from the wrathful glances he casts at Castinelli when they meet, and the frown which gathers darkly on his brow bodes no good."

"All this I have noticed," replied the father, "but it arises from his jealous love—rivals cannot be friends, and should Visconti gain the prize that both are so anxious to win, he would not, of course, have these causes to incite his rage."

"And yet, my dear father," resumed Ginevra, "I do not love him."

There was a brief silence, during which the lady's eyes were bent upon the floor, Montaldi was lost in thought.

"Child," he said, at length, "it would be madness to reject offers so advantageous as these for any of the reasons you have named; young men are not perfect, they all have their faults and follies. It is the cherished wish of my heart to have you secure an alliance with one of these dual families—indeed, I am bent upon the match."

There was something in the speaker's tone which gave Ginevra to understand that there was little, if any hope of shaking his purpose, and with a heavy heart, she sat there in solitude after her father had retired, looking wearily forward to the future, which seemed so dull, so joyless.

(To be continued.)

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN DEITIES.

THE religion of the ancient Egyptians consisted of symbolical worship. In the earliest periods they had no idea of the nature of the Supreme Power, but used to pay adoration to the sun and stars; the sun lights the earth and gives warmth and nourishment to all things. Again, the Egyptians, being an agricultural nation, observed that the annual renewal of the productions of the earth and the natural features of the country were indicated by the rising and setting of certain stars; for instance, the annual overflow of the Nile was indicated by the appearance of a very beautiful star towards the source of the river, which seemed to warn them against being taken by surprise, as a dog by barking gives notice of approaching danger; hence they called this star the "Sirius," or "Dog Star."

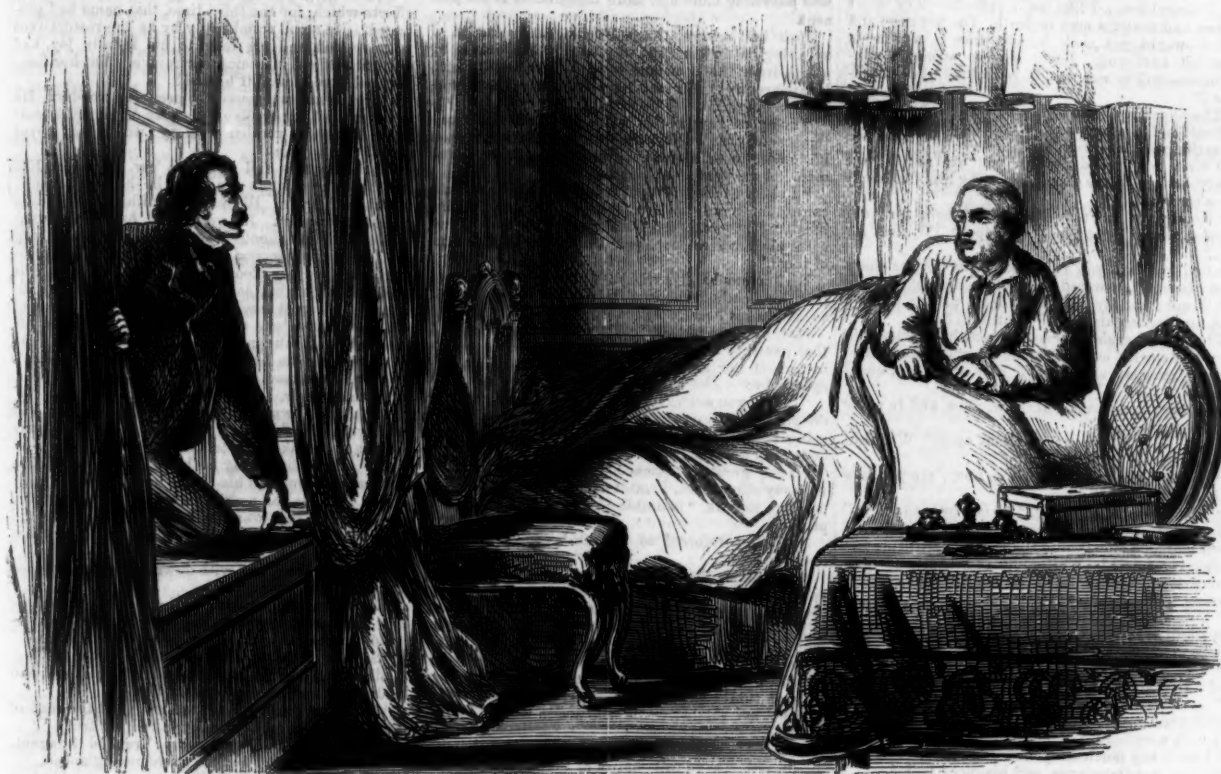
In the same manner the stars which appeared when the river began to overflow were called the "Stars of Aquarius;" stars of the "Taurus or Bull," those under which it was necessary to plough the earth with oxen; stars of the "Cancer or Crab," those which appeared when the sun, having reached the bounds of the tropic, returned backwards and sideways like a crab; stars of the "Leo or Lion," those which appeared when the lions, drawn by thirst from the desert, appeared on the banks of the Nile; stars of the "Libra or Balance," when the days and nights, being of equal length, maintain an equilibrium; stars of the "Scorpio or Scorpion," those which appeared when certain winds brought a burning vapour like the poison of the scorpion; and so on through the various signs of the Zodiac, and the various mysterious figures which identify the stars on the celestial globe.

These stars were their great warners, and their "signs for seasons, for days, and years;" and as, according to the Egyptian belief, they were constantly watching over their destiny and warning them of coming events, so, in process of time, they were regarded as deities and worshipped. In the course of events, however, the people, who knew at what time of the year the natural features of the country would occur from experience of prior years, omitted to regulate these periods by observation of the skies, and so forgot the motive which led to the adoption of these signs. The result followed that the symbols instead of the signs they were intended to denote, were worshipped, and invested with the attributes of the stars. They prayed to the bull for a plentiful harvest—to the scorpion not to pour out his venom upon nature. They revered the crab, the ram, the calf, and the serpent as gods, which originally served as the symbols of the various ordinations of creation.

AN AGED DIGNITARY OF THE CHURCH.—The very Rev. the Dean of Winchester entered upon his 94th year on Friday, February 26th, and the cathedral bells rang out merry peals in commemoration of the event. The Dean attended the cathedral and officiated at evening prayer on the same day.

REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF PROTRACTED SLEEP.—There is in the hospital at Bicêtre an old man who has slept without interruption for the last three weeks, in spite of the unremitting efforts to rouse him. Every vital function except that of breathing is suspended. He has grown rather fatter than the reverse. His pulse is low, but he retains a fresh and healthy appearance.

A SINGULAR LEGAL CUSTOM.—A curious custom prevails in Lincoln's-Inn. When any member of that learned body is made a sergeant-at-law, on taking the coil, he has to present the Queen and the Lord Chancellor with rings bearing the legend *Allud nobis agendum*. At the same time he is presented by the treasurer with a purse containing ten guineas, as a retaining fee in case the society should require his services on any future occasion.



[A STRANGE VISITOR.]

FAIRLEIGH; OR, THE BANKER'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE next morning, long before either Walter, his mother, or the sick stranger had awakened, the precocious Joshua was stirring about, both indoors and out.

The sun had just loomed up behind the eastern hills, the air was keen and refreshing, and the dew was still glistening on the grass when Joshua Simpkins silently opened the outside door, and stepped out upon the lawn in front. He stood with folded arms, gazing meditatively upon nature in her morning glory. Then he sank down upon the grass, not heeding or caring for the somewhat watery reception his garments might meet with by coming into contact with the dew. His thoughts seemed far away, and not of the pleasantest kind, if one could judge by his expression. He imagined he heard a step, and leaping to his feet, he looked sharply around.

"No," he muttered, "I'm always catchin' up something," and he resumed his former position.

Whether to calm his troubled thoughts, for pleasure, or from force of habit, I will not venture to say, but certain it is, that he drew a meerschaum pipe from his pocket, and although he had had no breakfast, he very deliberately proceeded to light it, and inhaled and exhaled the smoke with evident relish.

Leaving him to his narcotic and vaporous enjoyment, let us turn our attention to the young stranger. He had just awoke, and looked about him with that doubtful, bewildered air which is incidental upon a person's first awakening in a strange place, especially if he be ill.

Slowly, as his mind became more clear, and the remembrance of his adventure returned, he became aware of his situation, and the agency that had brought him to the place he was now in. In a moment his meditations were interrupted; he heard a slight, grating sound, and turned his head towards the window. It was slowly moving up, and between the curtain and the frame a small, white hand was perceptible.

"What new incident is this?" he mused, and with some curiosity calmly awaited farther developments. He had not long to wait, however, for in an instant the curtain was pushed aside, and a little form bounded into the room.

The intruder was a young man of apparently about

twenty summers. His black, curly hair was parted very low upon the left side, and circled around his ear in close, massive curls; upon the other side, it was pushed up from the brow. His face was fair, not a blemish being visible, and the effeminacy of his features was relieved by a large moustache that curled gracefully around his lip. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and was withal very handsome. The wounded youth gazed at him for a moment, and then thought:

"If it were not for that moustache, I would take my oath that this is a woman."

Then he remarked aloud:

"Well, sir, you enter my room very unceremoniously, and at rather an early hour. Will you tell your purpose?"

"Yes, directly," he replied, and fumbled in his pocket a moment, drew therefrom a sheet of paper and a pencil, and handed them to the young man.

"What shall I do with these articles, miss—for your voice sounds so much like a female one, that I am constrained so to address you."

"Tis my misfortune I am well aware—but to business. I wish you to write a few words, and then return it to me. Be quick—time presses!"

"What shall I write?" queried the other, growing more astonished.

"Why, write the words that you would naturally use, and briefly, to give your family a faint idea of your welfare."

"You know me? How?"

"Oh, don't stop to waste breath!" he impatiently commanded. "I will satisfy you sometime or other."

"But now—" said the young man, as he returned the paper, with the desired words written thereon.

"I must be going," ejaculated the intruder, and before the young man was aware of it, he was again alone.

"Well, well," he murmured, "I think my life must be one routine of adventure; here is another mystery. A young man opens my window, which I will swear I saw fastened last night, pulls out a paper, makes me write, and before I have time to ask a question, disappears. This is all very strange; everybody seems to know me, and I am tossed about from one place to another like a football upon a playground. Really, this is quite inexplicable."

This was the substance of his thoughts for the next half-hour. Then he fell into a gentle sleep, and, some two hours after, he awoke, to find a young man again at his bedside.

"You here again?" he muttered, dreamily.

"I have not been here before," replied Walter, surprised at the question.

"Oh no; I beg your pardon. The reason I asked the question was because I have been favoured with a visit from an unknown individual, about two hours since, I think."

Walter gazed at him inquiringly; he feared that he was out of his mind.

The other divined his thoughts from his expression, and instantly answered:

"You need have no fears for my sanity—what I tell you is truth."

"I do not doubt it in the least. You will pardon my manner; though it is but natural, under the circumstances, that the thought should arise in my mind."

"Very true," replied the wounded man, and he then proceeded to give his hearer an account of the incident.

"It is very strange, to say the least," remarked Walter, "I will ask Josh if he has seen any such person." After a moment's pause, he added, "would you not rather recline upon the couch in the parlour? It would be more pleasant, I think."

"Yes, if it will put you to no inconvenience," he replied.

"Not the least; I will speak to my mother."

In a moment Walter returned, and assisted the young man in dressing. He insisted upon walking. At that moment Josh appeared upon the scene, and hearing the young man's words, at once began a tirade against any such performance, and concluded his remarks by lifting him very carefully, and carrying him into the other room, where he laid him upon the couch with all a man's strength and woman's tenderness, and then gave him the following characteristic advice:

"Never try to tempt showin' off your own strength when you're ill. When a man's ill, he's ill, and ain't well; do you understand that?"

At certain parts of his garrulous friend's advice a bright flush swept over the young man's features, and he frowned; but he saw the spirit that prompted it was good, and he only laughed.

Mrs. Dalvane congratulated him upon his improved appearance, and shortly after they sat down to breakfast; Mrs. Dalvane, with motherly care, seeing that the stranger wanted for nothing.

It was noticeable during the meal that Josh ate very fast, spoke not a word, and that his face was very near his plate.

An hour afterwards the little doctor entered. After greeting the company, he approached the sick man, and exclaimed, in his merry way:

"Ah! here is our wounded youth, looking as fine as need be—wounds doing well—good appetite, he?"

Ah, I thought so. I like such patients—they don't whine, and pester a man to death. You are good and sound—might get such knocks once a month—it wouldn't hurt you. Never saw so strong a constitution—will-power, too, is remarkable, re-markable!"

The physician bestowed a pleased look upon his patient, and turning round, opened a desultory conversation with Mrs. Dalvane.

"Well, my friend Joshua, you are not ill, are you?" exclaimed the doctor, slapping him familiarly upon the back.

"No, sir, you can't find a market here for your physic; when I get ready to depart I'll send for you."

"Ha! ha! ha! yes, very good! you are as sharp as my lancet," answered the doctor, enjoying the fun. "P'raps; but my sharpness don't prick a fellow's arm, nor lighten his purse," continued Josh.

This little byplay served to put the company in excellent spirits, especially the wounded man, who eagerly grasped at anything that afforded amusement.

Walter seated himself at the window, and in a few moments observed:

"Mother, here comes that odious agent! What can he want?"

"He has no occasion to visit us now; are you sure he is coming here?"

"Yes," he replied, rising, "he is now at the door."

In a moment Walter reappeared, and the turgid agent marched slowly into the room.

Turning towards Walter, he coughed, and then gazing down upon him, in his magisterial, condescending way, he said:

"Young man, fasten my horse. I forgot it."

Instantly the blood rushed into the youth's cheek, and he replied, distinctly and determinedly:

"Who are you, sir, that you presume to command me? If you desire your horse watched you can do it."

The great man adjusted his eye-glasses, scowled, and with a withering glance at Mrs. Dalvane, said:

"I can't say much for your bringing up, boy."

Walter saw the glance, and his blood boiled.

Stepping forward, he exclaimed, in a tone which expressed force and meaning:

"Be careful, sir, how you hurl your innuendoes. You are landlord here, but are not privileged to insult me and mine. I care not whether you are king or ploughboy, you shall not glance at my mother in that sneering way. Boy though I am, I will not brook insult; hence, beware!"

As he uttered the last words, his fists closed, and he stood face to face with the pompous agent, his eye gleaming, and determination written upon his features.

"Walter, my son, desist, control yourself; words cannot injure us," remarked Mrs. Dalvane, anxiously, who knew her son's high temper and dauntless courage, for she had seen both tested, and almost feared that he might, in the heat of passion, assault agent.

Josh and the wounded man had listened attentively to the colloquy, and both smiled their approval at Walter's course.

The great man seemed to forget all about his horse. He twirled his chair, gazed around the room with the air of an inspector, coughed, lowered his glasses, drew a chair slowly towards him, and sat down upon it.

This arduous undertaking having been accomplished with comparative safety, and his glasses, coat-tails, chain, and gloves having been properly placed, smoothed down, adjusted, and otherwise looked after, he coughed a few times. This indispensable formula having been gone through, he gesticulated a moment, and then observed:

"Your family seems to have increased."

"This gentleman is wounded, and was brought here as the nearest place, and I am sure, we are glad to have him. The other gentleman rescued him."

"Humph! I thought you were poor. You cannot afford to—"

"Enough, sir," gently remonstrated Mrs. Dalvane. "Allow me to judge with regard to that. I believe I owe you nothing."

"Humph! pride and poverty, charity and imbecility, always go hand in hand."

"Have you come on business?" she asked.

"Yes," he rejoined. "I shall raise your rent eight shillings a month. You will have to pay the increase when it next becomes due."

"What is this for? Have you done so to your other tenants?"

"That has nothing to do with it. The great banker vests full power in me. We are indissoluble. I have told you what I came for; I have no explanation to give."

For a few moments silence prevailed. The agent did not seem inclined to depart, and his presence

was becoming more and more disagreeable to all present.

Josh had several times been upon the point of speaking out in his blunt way, but was restrained by a look from the occupant of the couch, and though he apparently knew not its signification, he nevertheless obeyed it.

The agent twirled his watch-chain, looked contemptuously at Josh, whose head was resting upon his hands, then directed his eyes towards the wounded man. A moment after, he said:

"I should think, Mrs. Dalvane, and I believe I am competent to advise," with a grand flourish of his hand, "that you had better transfer your guests to some place where people are better able to take care of them."

Walter was boiling within, but a warning glance from his mother checked the current of anger that surged in his heart, and trembled upon his lips.

Mrs. Dalvane felt the insult very keenly, but with that gentility and good breeding which always characterised her actions, she replied, firmly, but respectfully:

"Sir, if you are so interested in my welfare, why do you raise my rent? I desire that you forbear using language which pains me, and cannot fail to annoy my guests."

"Your guests?" remarked the agent. "Why, with my experience, I can tell you that this man," pointing to Josh, "is nothing more than a swindling pedlar."

Josh, thus referred to, trembled visibly, but said nothing.

"This fellow," continued the great man, bestowing upon his hearers a glance which a marquis might cast upon a ploughboy, "is nothing more than a scheming adventurer; these two go about saving each other, and getting lodged and fond. I know their tricks. I have seen the world."

"Sir, I wish you to understand that I will hear no more of this!" said Mrs. Dalvane, decidedly. "My house is my castle; those who are in it shall not be insulted."

"Please to remember, madam, that I—I," striking his breast—"have full control of the greater portion of this neighbourhood."

"We do know it!" burst forth Walter, unable to restrain himself. "We also know you to be an ignorant, bombastic, overbearing fellow, which, by some incomprehensible mistake, nature moulded into the shape of man, and thereby heaped an everlasting disgrace upon the race. H—"

"Walter, my son, forbear; do not lower yourself by communication," cautioned Mrs. Dalvane.

Again was oil poured upon the surging waters, and Walter subsided, not without a great effort, however.

The agent arose, placed his glasses across his nose, and regarded Walter as he would a dog.

"Mrs. Dalvane, will you allow me to ask you what rent you pay?" said the wounded man.

"Certainly; twenty-six shillings per month? What business is that of yours, young man?" shouted the agent, turning quickly upon him.

"Oh, none of any consequence. Curiosity, perhaps."

"Will you allow me to ask you, most respected sir," continued the wounded man, with a slight sneer, "who it is that you are in partnership with?"

"Yes; I am associated directly with the well-known and highly respected millionaire, Edgar Ormsby, Esq."

Again Mrs. Dalvane paled; a shudder passed over her frame, but by a superhuman effort she controlled herself, and, without raising her eyes, sat comparatively quiet.

"Indeed!" answered the occupant of the couch, not noticing Mrs. Dalvane's tremor; "he must think a great deal of you."

"He does," replied the agent, not noticing the irony. "We are firm friends. Do you know him?"

"I have heard of him," was the evasive reply.

"Humph! I asked a very foolish question. I might have known that he would not cast a glance at people of your class."

"Who do you receive instructions from with regard to the real estate?" continued the wounded man.

"Indeed, young man, what business is it of yours; who are you?"

The young man rose on his elbow, a smile savouring of triumph and contempt resting upon his features, and he replied, in stinging tones:

"Why, Mr. Solomon Barclay, agent of the Ormsby real estate herein situate, and member of the church, I am Clarence Ormsby, from whom you receive your instructions. Are you satisfied?"

As his name smote upon her ear, Mrs. Dalvane's face assumed a ghastly pallor, her knees knocked together, and she would have fallen to the floor had not Josh sprang towards her, and caught her in his stout arms.

Poor Walter was again an agonised witness of the effects which, for the third time, that name had produced. He stood tremblingly by as the restoratives were applied, and ere long, to his infinite joy, had one consolation in seeing her revive. But her face, how pale and pained it looked!

Clarence had witnessed the scene in wonder. He could not fail to perceive the cause of her indisposition. Here was another mystery; would they never cease?"

As these words fell upon his ear, it flashed like lightning through his mind that he had been insulting his employer. His name, position—everything he feared was lost. He was cowed, humiliated, vanquished! What should he do? He had gone a step too far; he had spoiled his own prospects! He devoutly wished the floor would open that he might sink from sight, but as that was an impossibility, he adopted the most feasible plan he could devise, and while attention was directed to Mrs. Dalvane, attempted to sneak out of the room. But he was watched; ere he had taken three steps Clarence's voice rang out loud and clear:

"Sit down, sir, I have not done with you!"

"Yes, sit down, Mr. Eye-glass-broad-cloth, and make yourself miserable; we can't fail to lose your company; we like your talk so well we want to hear more," said Josh, placing his hand upon his shoulder, and pushing him into his chair.

Mrs. Dalvane had nearly recovered from her spasm, and the effect of it was still further destroyed by the new and interesting developments that claimed her attention.

The agent arose, and with downcast eyes advanced towards Clarence.

"Mr. Ormsby," he began. "I—I—really hope, my dear sir, that you will lay my faults to my head, instead of my—"

"Silence, swindler," thundered Clarence.

Like a culprit, as he was, he sneaked back, and holding his head down, remained quiet.

"Now," said Clarence, "tell me what the rent of this house is, and mind that you tell the truth."

"Twenty-six shillings per month," replied the agent.

Mrs. Dalvane and her son exchanged glances.

"What did you do with the remaining twelve that you cheated this lady out of?"

"I kept it," sobbed the terrified agent.

"What were you about to put eight more upon the rent for? mind, the truth."

"For the same purpose," he feebly replied.

"Have you treated all the tenants in the same manner?—be careful now."

"Be merciful, Mr. Ormsby. Alas, I have been weak, and was tempted," he apologetically responded.

"Are you sorry?" asked Clarence, sarcastically.

"Yes, oh, yes. You will not deal hardly with me; we are but weak, and I—"

"And you are as big a sneaking, deceiving, hypocritical, hard-hearted, unmitigated scoundrel as ever kept out of prison," thundered Clarence, his wrath bursting forth.

Walter Dalvane, be it said, was not in his heart revengeful, but it seemed too good to see this overbearing, cruel man humiliated, and forgetting everything else, he burst into a loud laugh, in which he was joined by Josh, who made the room echo to his sonorous voice. Pale Mrs. Dalvane smiled; the humour was contagious, and for a moment the agent was the butt of boisterous and bitter ridicule, which, however, was well merited.

After the mirth had ceased, Clarence continued his examination with:

"How much money have you got with you?"

"One hundred pounds," he replied, in a low tone.

"Now, sir, the next thing for you to do is to place twelve of that in my hostess's hand."

He did as commanded, with very bad grace.

"Now beg her pardon for your many insults."

"Oh, Mr. Ormsby, I—"

"Do as I tell you or you shall go to—"

"I will, I will," answered the subdued agent, and he humbly begged Mrs. Dalvane's forgiveness.

"Now the son the same, be respectful, mind."

He cast an imploring glance, but it was of no avail, and seeing the young heir was inexorable, he begged the pardon of Walter, to whom it was enjoyment rich and rare, such as he had not experienced for many years.

"Now, Mr. Simpkins comes next," continued Clarence, with a smile of exultation.

"He?" groaned the crushed agent, with deep mortification.

"And why not him? Do as I bid you, instantly," ordered Clarence, who was enjoying his power.

With all the reluctance possible, and with the utmost aversion did he go through with the form.

"Now repeat that, and if by word or look you signify your unwillingness I will put you in goal in less than two hours. Do your hear?" and Clarence gazed angrily upon him.

Mr. Barclay knew that he had to do it, and although it cut him, he went through with the performance with better grace than at first.

"Now," said Clarence, "you are to understand that you are hereby discharged from the employ of Ormsby and Son," he cleverly annexing the last word to add to his prestige, for in reality it did not belong there.

"Oh, Mr. Ormsby, have mercy—"

"A few moments ago you said that charity and imbecility went hand and hand. I shall act upon your own words, and have no charity or mercy either," interrupted Clarence, who believed in rewarding the good and punishing the bad.

"Oh, pity me; I will do better—I will refund—I will do anything—everything you say, only don't turn me away. My life will be disgraced, my name will be blasted for ever, my family will be scorned—oh, pity, pity me! You have a good heart—exercise your charity, your mercy—oh, save me from such a fate!" moaned the subdued and crestfallen agent in the most piteous of tones, and gazing at Clarence with the most pleading of glances.

Although Mrs. Dalvane had suffered by this man's duplicity, and been insulted by him, still his apparent repentance, and the sad manner in which he begged to be forgiven, had touched her kindly heart, and she looked at Clarence appealingly in his behalf.

The young man saw the glance, and although he appreciated the motives that actuated it, and the feelings of sympathy it conveyed, still he thought he knew the man's character better than she did. He was charitable in the last degree, but he considered it his duty to punish the man who had robbed little children of bread, thinking as he did that his repentance was composed principally of selfishness, and only brought to bear to further his own interests. Accordingly, he resumed his examination of the repentant Mr. Barclay by asking:

"How long have you practised this deception, this embezzlement?"

"Don't think too hardly of me; for—for—the last five years!" he managed to ejaculate.

"Five long years?" repeated Clarence. "And you a member of the church, calling yourself a Christian, and profaning God's temple with your presence. Avaunt, thou canting hypocrite! A pretty subject you are to ask for mercy."

He began to sob and beg, when Clarence interrupted him by saying:

"Let us see the amount which you have wrongfully taken from people who could ill afford to lose it."

Clarence took a card and pencil from his pocket, and reckoned aloud.

"There are twenty houses in your care. On each of these you have surreptitiously obtained twelve shillings for one month—that is, for one year. You confess that you have carried it on five years. Your repentance, indeed!" ejaculated Clarence, with a look of withering scorn and contempt at the forlorn object before him.

When brought to a real statement of figures his crime seemed to assume proportions more huge, and although Mrs. Dalvane pitied the man she dared not appeal to Clarence, for that gentleman did not seem disposed to show much leniency.

Clarence tapped the card meditatively for a few moments, and then said:

"Mr. Simpkins, would you counsel me to deliver this man up to the authorities?"

The agent groaned with anguish, attempted to speak, but a wave of Clarence's hand stopped him.

Josh, thus appealed to, scratched his head for a few moments, and then very slowly delivered himself of the following speech:

"It's a curious case. I hardly know what to say. The fellow 'pears to feel rather shaky, but he may be playin' false, and it seems hard to have honest pe'ple cheated. Well, after all I think you'd better do as you think best; I can't give an opinion."

This very pertinent and logical speech caused smiles to play upon the features of his listeners, with the exception of Mr. Barclay, who was not exactly in the mood for mirth.

For a few moments more Clarence deliberated. Meanwhile, Mrs. Dalvane was watching every variation of his expression. She hoped he would not consign the man to ignominy, although he so richly deserved it. The agent noticed her expression, and it gave rise to a faint hope in his breast, although it was like "heaping coals of fire upon his head."

"As I said before," resumed Clarence, breaking the silence, "you are hereby discharged; I don't think that we owe you anything. For the sake of your children, I am withheld from making your crime public and prosecuting you. But remember, the first overt or unkind act, wherever you may be, and this shall be brought up against you."

The man hardly moved. Now and then he groaned, and by his appearance it was evident he was really sorry for his departure from the path of rectitude. But this, to have been true repentance, should have

come upon him while engaged in the wickedness, there had been time enough. For a few moments he remained in the same position, and then arose to depart.

"Be seated, sir," commanded Clarence, as he saw the movement. "I wish to name your successor, to whom, as soon as I shall desire it, I wish you to give all books and papers."

With an air of utter dejection did the now completely crushed man wait to hear the words which would add to his humiliation, mortification, and pain.

"The person who is to assume your former position is one in whom I have unbounded confidence, and the same one whom so short a time ago you commanded to 'hold your horse.'"

"Mr. Ormsby, you surely do not intend to appoint Walter as agent?" said Mrs. Dalvane, with a perceptible unsteadiness in her tone.

Walter, who saw his dream being fulfilled, rapturously hugged the thought, and eagerly awaited his mother's decision.

"Certainly, Mrs. Dalvane, why not? He is competent, I think—honest I know, else he could not call you mother."

"But I—" the poor woman sank into a chair without finishing her remark.

There was a struggle going on in her mind between her wishes for her son's advancement, and the phantom of the past that rose up to prevent it. She saw Walter's eyes resting anxiously upon her. She thought of the benefit that would accrue to him, the happiness 'twould give him, the realisation of his dream. All these pleaded for a decision in his favour, but peace of mind argued for her, and still undecided, she preserved silence.

Clarence plainly saw, by her hesitation, that she did not regard it favourably. If there had been no obstacle to oppose it, he was satisfied that her gratitude would have been spontaneous, and that on behalf of her son she would have immediately accepted his offer. What, then, was this sadness and prolonged meditation over a question which an instant's thought could decide?

In Walter's mind the same question was uppermost. A moment ago, and the future looked bright before him. Two hundred and fifty a-year—to him almost a gold mine—seemed within his grasp. Now he knew by the expression upon his mother's features, that to accept it was an utter impossibility. He saw his visions of happiness fade away, leaving the same dark, dreary blank that he now existed in. The shock was very painful for a moment, and suggested rebellious thoughts. But such feelings expired almost with their birth. His great love for his mother, and his confidence in the wisdom of her decision, whatever that might be, overruled all other thoughts and emotions, and he determined that, come what might, he would be dictated by her superior knowledge and discrimination, knowing it would be for the best.

Accordingly he was not much surprised when his mother thanked the young man for his excellent offer, but gently, politely, yet firmly declined it.

Clarence knew by her tone and manner that it was not pride, nor any kindred consideration that caused her thus to reply. Grateful, he knew she was; that she was firm in her refusal, and that pressing the matter would be unpleasant and unprofitable he was also convinced. Accordingly the matter was dropped, and with a few more words the crestfallen agent was dismissed.

The event of the morning seemed to cast a shadow over the spirits of all.

Mrs. Dalvane spoke but little, although her face wore the same mild look, and she attended to the wants of her wounded guest with the same care and kindness which had hitherto marked her actions in that respect.

Walter could not help feeling sad, it was but natural that he should. He strove to banish the dreams of happiness that would arise before his mental vision, when he reflected upon the lucrative position and the independence—aye, almost affluence that it would bring with it. It was a hard task for one so young in life and so full of romance, to turn his thoughts away from the bright and beautiful realms which his dream had presented, and which seemed almost realised, and to plod wearily on through the snows and coldness of life.

"Ah," he thought, "the dark scene is not yet ended."

He threw himself upon his bed, and gave his thoughts full scope. It seemed for a moment that he was about to descend lower than he had ever been. These dark thoughts held possession of his mind, when, chancing to raise his eyes, he saw his half-finished picture. An Italian sunset scene he was painting from memory. This served to arouse nobler thoughts within him.

"Why should I regret?" he soliloquised; "I do not appreciate my blessings. Did I forget the twenty pounds I received for my picture, and it was not near

so good as this? Be hushed, complaining, restless spirit; be thankful for what you now enjoy; would you take gold for your genius? No," he exclaimed, and he leaped from his bed, endowed with new life. New feelings, divine emotions crept into his soul. He grasped his brush, and inspired, as it were, he flew to his easel, and devoted himself with rapture to his beloved art.

Clarence felt uneasy. The atmosphere around him seemed to have changed. What caused him to feel thus he knew not, but the feeling grew upon him, dismiss it he could not.

In the afternoon the merry doctor again called, and even his vivacity and pleasantry did not have the effect that it formerly had.

In reply to Clarence's question when it would be safe for him to travel, the doctor answered that he could leave in a week or eight days at the farthest.

This somewhat disappointed the young man, who felt that he was a burden to Mrs. Dalvane, and wished to get away as quickly as possible, that he might relieve the anxiety which he knew they experienced with regard to him at home.

The afternoon wore slowly away. Even loquacious Josh seemed to partake of the general silence, and he reclined upon the lawn, smoking his pipe and not at all communicative.

At tea, Josh informed them that he must take his departure. All were surprised as well as grieved at this declaration, and so expressed themselves. At parting it was noticed that Josh was strangely affected. Clarence remarked upon it in a jocular manner, and the other characterised it as "the fever and ague that he caught a short time since." This was sufficient, and after a few more words the pedlar took his leave.

But little was said, and the evening passed rather quietly away.

Mrs. Dalvane had formed a resolution, but she had not revealed it to her son. It could not be expected until Clarence should get well and depart.

(To be continued.)

SOMETIMES SAPHIRE. SOMETIMES PALE.

BY J. R. LITTLEPAGE.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Tremble, thou wretch, that hast
Within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipped of justice!
Hide thee, thou bloody hand,
Thou perjured and thou simular
Man of virtue!

King Lear.

THE old lady in green spectacles opened the door of the carriage in which Oscar was seated, and stepping in, took her place opposite to the young land-steward. She was still nursing her fat poodle, which slept peacefully, though its breathing was wheezy and asthmatic.

Oscar felt half inclined to leave the carriage when the disagreeable dame came in, but before he had time to put his intention into practice the train moved off.

"Met again," observed the old lady, in her cracked, high-pitched tones. "I wonder how your wife feels now?"

Oscar trembled with anger at the persistent impertinence of the woman. He was silent for a few moments, then he said:

"Suppose, madam, you choose some other theme for conversation and remark than the feelings of my wife and the proceedings of myself. I do not at all object, for instance, to discourse upon the state of chronic ill-health which appears to be the lot of your asthmatic poodle, but I have a most decided objection to discussing the state of health of my wife."

Now it may strike the reader as almost impossible, but it is nevertheless the fact, that Oscar had up to this very moment been so occupied with his own thoughts and busy plans, that he had forgotten the change in his appearance and dress, and it had not struck him as awful or wonderful that the terrible old dame in green spectacles should have recognised the fair-haired youth in fashionable attire, as one and the same with the tall, white-bearded man, in the wool comforter and brown overcoat.

The old lady did not speak again immediately. The dusk had gathered over the suburbs through which the train was passing, and the houses, leafless trees, churches, and street corners, took weird shapes in the mist.

The old lady had relapsed into silence after the last remark of the rector's nephew, when all at once the recollection that he had worn a disguise the last time that he had spoken to the old woman smote upon his soul like the dart of death. He bounded violently in his seat, but that the train was now

rushing through the fog like a lightning-shaft, with all the noise and uproar of the mighty breath of steam, Oscar would perhaps have bounded from the carriage window.

"Dear me," said the old woman, "what a peculiar start you gave."

"I suddenly remembered that I had left a valuable box of jewellery in the waiting-room at the London station," said Oscar.

"I conjectured that it was a sudden remembrance which made you start," said the lady, drily.

Oscar paused a moment; his heart was beating so quickly that he could hardly breathe.

Who was this terrible, sarcastic, calm, pitiless, old woman in green spectacles? If she had watched him too much, and too closely: if she knew any dark secret of his; if, in short, she held him in any way in her power, what was the best course for him to pursue? The train was flying rapidly now through the open country, the woman was old, weak and helpless, he was a young, vigorous man. Ah! he hesitated not from any conscience-pricking—through any shrinking from crime. Oscar was a soul which knew not compunction; the heaviest sins sat lightly on his stained and guilty spirit. He would have stunned the old woman by a blow from his iron fist, and have thrown her headlong from the carriage window, as remorselessly as he would have crushed a stinging insect, but that he was afraid just then of violence. Perhaps it was known to the guard and some of the passengers that the ugly old lady was travelling in the carriage with the handsome young gentleman, and if any harm befell the said ugly old lady, why the handsome gentleman might come to grief.

"You dear old creature," thought Oscar to himself, "how I long to send you so soundly to sleep, that you would never wake again."

He said, however, gently:

"Might I ask, madam, where I have had the extreme felicity of meeting you before? Was it in London; on the Continent; in the country? Was it last year, or the year before?"

"You would infer by that question that I have the advantage of you," said the old woman sharply.

"Most decidedly," rejoined Oscar, "since I never, to my recollection, set eyes upon you, madam, until this evening."

"That's very singular, indeed," said the old lady, "Why I remember you very well in Edinburgh, last June twelvemonth—you and your wife."

Oscar's heart gave a great bound of relief.

"My dear madam," he said, exultantly, "I never was in Edinburgh in my whole life, and I have not a wife, nay, am I not a little too young to think of such things? I assure you when you first entered the carriage and addressed me as though we had met before, and talked about my wife, I did not feel, pray excuse me, at all comfortable in travelling with you."

"You mean that you thought I was mad?" asked the singular old woman.

"I will not be so rude to a lady," replied Oscar, "as to say that; but really I thought you were eccentric."

"I am pretty sure that I have met you in Scotland," replied the lady. "Why, dear me, is not your name Tomkins?"

Oscar laughed scornfully.

"Certainly not, my name is a little more pleasant in sound than Tomkins."

"Then you don't admire the name of Tomkins?" asked the old lady.

"I think it an abominable name, madam," returned Oscar.

"That's rather a pity, since it happens to be my name," said the old lady. "I have no relations, have about one hundred thousand pounds, and if I could meet with a very gentlemanly young man named Tomkins, I should be inclined to consider his interests."

The greedy soul of Oscar fastened foolishly upon the bait; at the name of his idol, gold, all his instincts bowed themselves in abject homage.

"I am sure if it would be any kind of satisfaction to you, madam, I would take the name."

"It would be a very satisfactory thing if I could find an heir to my liking," said the old lady, "and if you will give me your name and address, I'll give you mine, and then we can correspond with one another; as for me, I am going to get out at the next station, so that if you will exchange cards, you shall hear from me in the course of next week."

Oscar had soon lost all dread of the singular old dame, he gave her one of his cards, and received one from her in exchange. At the next station she descended, and the poodle dog and carpet bag accompanied her. Oscar then examined her card by the light of the carriage lamp. It was simply this, "Miss Tabitha Tomkins, Rose Cottage, Hammersmith."

"Dear me, what a dolt I was to distress myself about that old creature," said Oscar. "She is as mad as a March hare, and probably addresses everybody

in the same manner. I wish she would leave me one hundred thousand pounds though, even with Cathleen's fortune it would make me independent, and would it not be a masterpiece of triumph to compel my haughty lady-love to become Mrs. Tomkins, it would be worth a thousand pounds!"

Oscar soon forgot the old, disagreeable woman in spectacles, and occupied his mind with thoughts of a pleasant character.

The train was an express by which he travelled and in less than three hours from the time of starting from Euston Station, Mr. Arkwright found himself at Upfield; from thence he took a fly to Dungenon Towers. It was nearly ten at night when the land-steward, who had entered by a side door, crossed the white, stone-pillared hall of the magnificent house which he planned to call his own. He found his chamber, attended to his toilette, rang his bell, and begged the under-housemaid, who answered it, to light him a fire in the little room, which he called his own, and to bring him a cup of coffee.

While this girl was attending to his fire, Oscar asked how the festivities had proceeded at Dungenon during the week of his absence, and whether any of the visitors had departed.

"No, on the contrary, others have arrived," said the girl; "and the company seemed merrier than ever. Sir Random Racket was the funniest gentleman in the world, he was always making bets with everybody, and he had made one with Mr. Earnshaw, the tutor, that he would row round the great pond on the moors, where the boat-house was, in five minutes. Sir Random and my Lord Beechfield had had a slight quarrel last night, because Miss Lamotte danced with Sir Random twice running. They are dancing now in the great hall, and had a band from Upfield;" and the girl wound up by saying, that she did not see why Mr. Oscar should not go in and have a peep at all the fun.

Now Oscar knew that the Lamottes, through their detestable pride, had never asked him to take a part in their evening festivities, had never introduced him to their great visitors; but on this evening his heart swelled with exultant joy, when he remembered that he held now a strong and cruel power over Mr. Lamotte.

There was no longer a piling, pale-faced Kate, fretting and mourning at the lone house on the moors, writing him letters every other day, and threatening him, now and anon, with exposure, if he tortured her with too much contempt. No, there was not any longer an outraged, miserable, excited wife in the neighbourhood, to come forward with a torrent of words, if it were found that Mr. Oscar Arkwright amused himself by making love to the handsomest and richest heiress in three counties.

Oscar went into the hall, filled with dazzling light, music, dancers, beauty, fashion, and pleasure, and he leaned against a pillar, and watched the gay throng pass before him, with a smile upon his handsome lip. He folded his arms, he looked upon all with a contemptuous consciousness of power.

Presently Miss Lamotte passed him, whirling round in a waltz with the reckless young baronet, Sir Random Racket. Cathleen wore blue silk, on that evening, pearls in her raven hair and around her white throat. She was slightly flushed, her large eyes danced with light, excitement, and mockery.

Oscar bowed to her as she flitted past; she acknowledged his greeting with a slight nod of recognition, not unkind, not unfriendly, but simply surprised, a little careless, a little haughty, he thought.

"Ah well, sweet lady, enjoy your hour while it lasts," thought the land-steward; "but before I sleep I will amuse myself by disturbing the rest of the amiable squire—where is he? Ah, there, in close confab with my Lord Beechfield, who scowls at my honourable baronet—is he jealous? Well and good, he shall be yet more jealous before the week is over, and in another quarter."

The dancing continued.

Presently, the servants carried refreshments round. Oscar watched Mr. Lamotte until he caught the silver-haired squire alone in a corner, eating a sandwich.

"Mr. Lamotte," he said, with a bow, "I have a matter of serious moment to consult you upon. There is a fire in the library, I think; would you have the kindness to accompany me there now?"

The proud squire looked up at his land-steward in cold surprise.

"I do not attend to matters of that kind in the evening, Mr. Arkwright," said the master of the mansion; "and in the morning I shall have occasion to reprimand you for your long and most unwarrantable absence. I have been in sore perplexity regarding the lease of the Red Farm during your absence."

"I am sorry, sir," replied Oscar, with his insolent smile. "I am more sorry than I can express. At the same time I am compelled to inform you that the

business which I have to consult you upon will admit of no delay."

"Is it anything concerning John Robert's lease?" asked the squire, sharply.

"No, sir," responded Oscar, coldly.

"Is it regarding the shares in the Railway Company?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Then what is it about?" asked the squire, sharply.

"It is connected, sir, with Fagin's Mill, now in the occupation of Joshua Grey," replied Oscar, speaking with a slow and cruel emphasis, and fixing his eyes on the proud squire.

Mr. Lamotte's face blanched to an ashen whiteness.

"Well, well," he muttered, hoarsely, "and what have I to do with Fagin's Mill now? Is it not in the possession of Mr. Grey?"

"I will tell you everything, sir, in the library," responded Oscar. "I do not wish to speak amid the crowd and glare of the ball."

The squire almost staggered to his feet.

Oscar followed him, with that bitter smile of insolent triumph, which sometimes a dependent wears when the time for humiliating a superior draws near. As they were crossing the room, they encountered Mrs. Lamotte, a blaze of rubies, crimson velvet, and diamonds.

The stout, majestic dame paused before her stately father-in-law and the attendant land-steward.

"Lord Beechfield wishes you to come and join in a game of whist," said the lady, in her pompous tone.

"Arkwright has business with me," returned the squire, hastily.

The haughty mother of Cathleen honoured Oscar with a cold stare. He bowed to her, but she did not return his greeting. Oscar ground his teeth, though he tried to smile pleasantly.

"The land-steward must defer it until to-morrow," said the lady.

"Pardon me, I cannot," answered Oscar.

"Nonsense, you must!" cried Mrs. Lamotte, with an angry frown.

"I will not, then, if I must speak more plainly," said Oscar, smiling a fearful smile.

"I think you forget yourself," said Mrs. Lamotte.

"Not at all, madam," answered Oscar. "There is not, I believe, another man in this world who remembers himself and his own interest more constantly."

"After this insolence," cried Mrs. Lamotte, "I am justified in saying that Dungenon Towers is no place for you. Mr. Lamotte, this man is an improper kind of person."

"I must hear what he has to say, nevertheless," responded the squire, hurriedly. "Follow me, Arkwright."

Oscar then followed him through the hall and passages into the library. A bright fire burned in the grate, and the squire himself lighted the chandelier.

"Now seat yourself," said Mr. Lamotte, pointing to a cushioned chair.

"Pardon me, I prefer to stand; only permit me to secure the door; I dread intruders more than I can say."

"Lock it, lock it," cried the squire. "Now is it locked? Well, come here. Now, what have you to say?"

"I wish to remind you of the transaction at the 'Raven,' at Upfield, twenty years ago, when you and Henry, Viscount Dungenon, supped together."

"I!" cried the squire, "I! What do you mean?"

"Simply that I am put in possession of facts which prove that you murdered your kinsman. Old James Grey has signed a confession, which his son Josh and I hold between us. There are the deeds of gift by which the mill passed from you to old James, to prove what reward you gave him for hiding the crime. Do not attempt to hide from me the truth, which I have been at much pains to discover. I tell you, Ambrose Lamotte, I and Josh Grey hold your life between us. Aye, proud gentleman, we could send you to Upfield gaol next week; we could gloat over the sight of a gentleman landowner in the felon's dock—glorious it would be in one sense, for I have suffered many indignities at the hands both of you and of your detestable daughter-in-law, Mrs. Lamotte."

"Sir!" exclaimed the proud squire, in a voice of intense surprise.

"Detestable daughter-in-law," repeated Oscar, with calm insolence.

He gloated over the astonishment and the humiliation of the man whom he called his employer, his chief, his governor, master, superior.

"You're startled—shocked at my plain speaking, sir," continued Oscar, "and I do not wonder at your surprise; but we will not waste time discussing about manners, respect due to high station, and all that kind of nonsense. I scheme to break down all the barriers that lie between me and high position, wealth, every-

thing that is worth having. I hope I shall not cause you to faint, sir, when I tell you that I purpose marrying Miss Lamotte within the month, and establishing myself here as the owner of the Towers, and all the lands and farms, forests and fresholds of Dungarvon."

The proud squire started to his feet, held on by the mantelshelf for support, while the room spun round him, and gasped out:

"What are your terms?"

"The hand of your fair grandchild, and the ownership of the Towers estates," replied the land-steward, sinking negligently into a chair. "You can think over the matter, and let me know your decision to-morrow."

"And what do you threaten if I do not grant your insolent demands," burst forth the old squire, giving vent now to the fury which raged within him.

"I threaten," answered Oscar, coldly, looking the great gentleman through with his pitiless eyes, which now became pale, "I threaten to hang you in front of Upfield Gaol, after the Spring Assizes."

To see the deadly look of mingled terror and anger which settled upon the white face of the master of Dungarvon! It was something horrible, frightful, harrowing.

"How can you do this?" he broke forth, at length.

"I tell you I hold the confession of James Grey, the miller, signed in his own writing. You gave him the mill to stop his mouth, old man, but the mill was not large enough to cover the blot on his memory. He has told me everything, the disguise, the game at *carte*, the forebodings of the poor young lord, the noise in the night, when he cried upon Grey for help, and Grey, bounding from his bed, found the door bolted, and then when he would have screamed and cried murder, you, Ambrose Lamotte, came to the door and bribed him heavily to hold his tongue while you finished your dreadful work, and he, the poor young lord, was too desperately wounded to cry out loudly. You murdered him, deny it if you can, and see if I will not hang you in the spring, and Miss Cathleen will become a beggar, for all your property will be confiscated to the Crown."

Mr. Lamotte hid his face in his hands, and trembled exceedingly. He was an old man, and the memory and horror of his past crime smote upon him terribly. He thought, for a space, of expostulation, and denial. Old Grey was half a lunatic. Would his crazy ravings be taken as evidence in a court of law?

"You forget," he said, turning fiercely upon Oscar, "that Old Grey is a raving madman."

"We will, nevertheless, put the matter to the test," returned the land-steward, with his cold smile. "If you like to risk your life upon the issue, if you think that your chance of old Grey's statement not being received as evidence is so great, pray let the case be judged upon its own merits. I am quite confident of the result."

"You are a demon in human shape!" cried the squire, now beginning to pace the room in his agony. "I cannot tell my granddaughter to marry you."

Oscar bowed his head.

"Then I will tell the first justice of the peace I encounter to charge Ambrose John Lamotte, Esq., of Dungarvon Towers, with the wilful murder of Henry Dungarvon. What a sensational paragraph that will be in the papers, to be sure!"

"I see it all," said the squire, coming suddenly to a stop in his rapid walk. "I must get out of the country. Tell me how much will bribe you into silence if I escape?"

"I repeat to you, that I mean to have the beautiful Cathleen for a wife, or else I will hang the noble Squire Lamotte. Your life or her hand—not less than one of those alternatives will content me."

"But what am I to say to her? What—what am I to do? How face my daughter-in-law, and—and Lord Beechfield?"

"You have no need to face him. Will you trust the management of this affair to me, and will you consent to accept of my guidance?"

"I must," replied the old squire.

"Then this is my plan. Write a letter to Mrs. Lamotte, and another to Cathleen, both at my dictation. Tell them that a certain secret influence compels you to marry your granddaughter to the nephew of the rector. Hint at some enormous property possessed by me, and hidden power which will cause ruin to you, and death, if I be offended. Tell both those women to bow themselves at my feet; let me see it in your own handwriting. Let me deliver these two letters myself."

"You ask too much," groaned the proud squire. "Ask me for forty thousand pounds; but Cathleen, Miss Lamotte, my granddaughter—"

"Is precisely the prize upon which I have set my heart," interrupted Oscar, quietly stroking his fair moustache. "It was to gain your grandchild's hand in marriage that I schemed to gain possession of your

terrible secret; either I marry Miss Lamotte or you take your trial at Upfield assizes for the murder of Henry Dungarvon."

He spoke as quietly and coldly, as if he had proposed a game of billiards, or the uncorking of a bottle of port; nothing could surpass the self-possession, the equanimity of the rector's nephew.

Squire Lamotte, looking at the handsome, fair, relentless face, felt his heart sink, and his breathing grow faint and laboured.

"I am in your power," he said, suddenly, "in your power; Cathleen must, must marry you. But what if she should protest that I have lost my senses? What if she defy me and refuse obedience?"

"Then," said Oscar, and his wicked eyes pale to the colour of glistening opal stones, "then you will have to tell her the whole truth."

Squire Lamotte clasped his forehead with his hands, and groaned aloud.

"Be sure your sin will find you out," he exclaimed.

Oscar started at the threatening words as though a gun had gone off close to his ear. A moment's reflection showed him that the squire had been addressing his own guilty soul, not the conscience of his land-steward.

"Come, come, give me pen, ink, and paper," said the squire, hurriedly. "I must do even as you say; I must write to these two unhappy women."

The letters were written, and Oscar pocketed them calmly.

"Good night, Mr. Lamotte," he said, at length, offering his hand to the humiliated gentleman. "We must be friends, for our interest is bound up in each other."

And the squire shook hands with him

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"I am a gentleman."
"I'll be sworn thou art."
Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions,
Thy spirit do give thee
Five-fold blazon." *Shakespeare.*

The next day was brilliant, though very cold. On this day Sir Random Racket had laid a bet with Earnshaw that he would row round the large pond, situated some four miles distant from Dungarvon, on the moor, in eight minutes' time.

Earnshaw, who was an excellent oarsman, had accepted the bet, and he informed Sir Random that not only was the pond too large to admit of the feat being performed in the time, but that the current was too rough. He said that he himself would not undertake to get round the pond in less than fourteen minutes. Earnshaw had avoided the gay company as much as he possibly could, but Sir Random had contrived to seek him out, and force his bet upon him.

Cathleen was sensible of an increased coldness on the part of Earnshaw, a sort of angry contempt, which made him avoid her as much as possible, and only address her when compelled to do so by the commonest politeness. The beautiful, impetuous heiress, unaccustomed to contradiction, amazed, humiliated, wounded to the very core of her warm and affectionate heart, yet contrived to behave with her usual graceful dignity.

She was, to all seeming, the gayest of the gay on the cold, sunny, January morning, when a party set off from the Towers to see the rowing match between the baronet and the tutor. Two carriages, filled with ladies and gentlemen, started for the pond. Earnshaw had walked on before, as also had Sir Random, and a few other gentlemen of the party. There were not any equestrians that day among the visitors.

Oscar Arkwright, the land-steward, perfectly amazed the haughty Mrs. Lamotte, by coming out, fashionably attired in an overcoat and velvet cap, and getting into the carriage, where she, her daughter, and two highly connected ladies were seated.

"Mr. Arkwright," said Mrs. Lamotte, "is it the wish of Mr. Lamotte, that you accompany this party?"

"I do not know, madam," replied Oscar, coldly, fixing his brilliant eyes upon the proud lady, "whether Mr. Lamotte has formed any wish about the matter—possibly not."

A faint tinge of colour visited the lady's pale cheeks.

"Then you had better inquire whether or not he is agreeable for this holiday excursion."

"I can at once perceive that Mrs. Lamotte is not willing that I should presume to join this party of pleasure," returned Oscar, bowing low; "but, perhaps, when Mrs. Lamotte has read this letter,"—and here Oscar handed her the squire's epistle, written the evening before at his dictation—"she will better comprehend the reason of my intrusion."

With a cold stare of surprise, Mrs. Lamotte transferred the letter to her pocket. Oscar reserved the pleasure of giving Cathleen her note, and watching

her read it, until another time; and the carriage rolled off from the Towers.

It was a cold drive. By the time that they reached the large pond on the moor, the ladies were glad to jump out and run up and down to warm themselves. The gentlemen were standing in a knot, laughing, talking, and amusing themselves by sending their dogs into the cold water.

The pond was a large one, and there was a tiny island in the midst, on which was erected a little, pagoda-shaped boathouse. There was but one boat that day on the pond; Sir Random Racket sprang into it, and Earnshaw stood upon the brink, holding a watch in his hand.

"By George," whispered one of the gentlemen, "these fellows choose cold weather for boating; old Lord Beechfield is wise to stay away."

Then Sir Random pulled at the oars, and went off in grand style. Cathleen came, and stood close to Earnshaw, who was still holding the watch. All the gentlemen looked with admiration on the beautiful heiress, but she saw none of them.

"If you had waited another day, Mr. Earnshaw," she said gaily, "the lake would have been covered with ice; it will certainly freeze this afternoon."

Earnshaw, with the full belief that she had laid that unworthy bet with her affianced husband, Lord Beechfield, was shocked, pained, and wounded at the persistence of the heiress.

"Why can she not leave me alone in my misery?" thought the young man, and his cheeks crimsoned; he felt too much hurt to answer Cathleen.

"How completely he hates me," thought poor Cathleen; and she added to herself, in a burst of passion, "I will be revenged again for this." Yet Miss Lamotte was outwardly gay and smiling.

The wind had risen, the tide was rough, Sir Random had hard work to make way, he was cheered by his friends, who waved their hats and handkerchiefs; but all was in vain, the young baronet did not reach the point from which he had started until full five minutes after the time.

"Lost your bet," shouted his friends. "Now, Mr. Earnshaw, it's your turn."

"Now it's the tutor's turn," said Cathleen, in a flippant tone.

The moment the words were uttered, the beautiful, headstrong creature could have bitten her tongue through. Earnshaw only flashed upon her one look of scorn from his dark eyes, and then pulled away manfully at the oars.

"Now how did that young fellow learn to become such a first-rate oarsman?" asked one of the gentlemen. "Wasn't he brought up abroad? and yet he has all the nerve and grace of a first-class Oxford man with the oars, such steady strokes; Random, my boy, he will beat you."

And so it proved. Earnshaw landed under the time agreed, amid the plaudits of the company, and to the genuine admiration of the good-natured Sir Random.

"And now, if you have all done making a fuss," said Cathleen, "let us all go on to the old manse and have our luncheon. I am famished to death."

The old manse was a venerable house, belonging to the Lamottes. It had been used as a shooting-box in past times, but now it was in the occupation of an old couple, who kept it in order in return for a permission to live in it rent-free, and it was thus useful upon odd occasions like the present, as a place of rendezvous, and a comfortable house to lunch or breakfast in.

The manse stood embowered in trees, and the grounds which surrounded it were fenced off from the bleak moor by a ha-ha. Earnshaw had won the bet of five guineas, the young baronet came and slipped them into his hand, just as the rusty old iron gates which led into the grounds of the manse fell back to admit of the carriages. Earnshaw received the money with a courteous smile, and he and the baronet slowly followed the rest of the gay party towards the house.

"She's a splendid-looking girl, is Cathleen," observed the baronet to the tutor, "but somehow she is not the sort of girl I covet for a wife. She is so clever and witty, so quickly down upon a fellow, before a fellow knows what she is about. I am half afraid she has picked up a pocket-book of mine, in which I had made some very curious entries, all about her ladyship, too, which makes it worse. I missed the book three weeks ago, when first I came here; only the luckiest thing about it is that it has not my initials, R. R., upon the cover, but P. E., those of a cousin of mine, from whom I once stole the book in a frolic."

Earnshaw paid but slight attention to this account of Sir Random's pocket-book; but the reader will recollect that Cathleen believed the book and the sentiments to be those of Earnshaw.

Arrived at the old manse, the gay company were ushered into the large, old-fashioned parlour. There was no carpet on the floor, and the bright flames of

the roaring fire were reflected on the polished, dark oak boards.

A table, covered with a snowy cloth, cups and spoons, not of silver, a service of gorgeous ancient china, and the white-haired, smartly dressed old couple who had charge of the manse.

All these people and things were waiting to serve the ladies and gentlemen with the good cheer they had brought in their carriages. For Mrs. Lamotte had seen fit to provide venison-pasties, cold pheasants, sandwiches of tongue and chicken, biscuits, cakes, and oranges, under the seats; and there was an abundance of champagne for the ladies, and bitter ale for the gentlemen.

A grand luncheon was that in the dining-room of the old manse. Everybody was hungry, and everybody eat heartily. There was a dance, though without music, afterwards, and then a game of hide and seek through the weird old mansion.

All this while Oscar had not broken his terrible news to Cathleen Lamotte, nor had Mrs. Lamotte opened her letter, indeed it remained forgotten in her pocket.

The short winter day was growing dull, the wind had risen, and a little snow had fallen to the earth, when the visitors poured out of the manse.

"I am too cold to ride," said Cathleen, "I mean to walk the four miles back to the Towers."

"So will I," cried young Albert Viner, who was of the party.

It happened that Miss Lamotte had not declared her resolution of taking the four miles' walk to the Towers in the presence of any of her gentlemen friends, save Earnshaw and his pupil. By chance it happened that these three, Miss Lamotte, Earnshaw, and Albert, found themselves alone at the side of the pond. After leaving the manse, the carriages had driven on.

Cathleen had managed to lose her friends, Earnshaw walked along silently, Albert chatted gaily. Presently Cathleen stopped suddenly.

"Mr. Earnshaw," she said, "will you row me over to the boat-house; I want to watch this red, dusky sunset from the island. They say you catch such a weird view of the old manse from the boat-house."

"It is a cold January evening, Miss Lamotte, and the snow is beginning to fall," added Earnshaw.

"I like to overcome difficulties and objections," said Cathleen; "come, Mr. Earnshaw, don't refuse to row me over."

The boat lay chained to a pole close to the pond. Cathleen stepped into the frail little boat. Albert, rubbing his hands, cried out:

"It's too cold work, for me. Good-bye!" and off ran Master Viner.

Earnshaw stepped into the boat, unchained it, and pushed off towards the boat-house, wondering at the wild caprice of Miss Lamotte. He was perfectly silent all the while that he rowed Cathleen towards the boat-house.

Arrived there, he handed her out, and followed her to the point from whence she wished to watch the sunset.

"It is almost gone," said Earnshaw.

"Almost!" echoed Cathleen, "but look, Mr. Earnshaw, there, just between those bare-armed trees, do you see the gloomy, wicked-looking old manse, and that red glimmer above it in the sky—does it not look awful?"

"It looks sombre, picturesque, wild, with those storm clouds hastening from the south to meet the red squadrons of the sunset," rejoined Earnshaw.

"You speak like a poet," said Cathleen.

Earnshaw was silent.

"But now let us return," for the gloom and intense reserve of Earnshaw gave her a pain at her heart.

They then went down to the water's edge. Alas, for the young pair on that bitter winter night, the boat had slipped its cable, and drifted far out into the pond, the dusk had so gathered that they could not either of them see a trace of it. The snow was now coming down in blinding sheets.

Earnshaw lost his cold reserve when he saw the lady of his love in danger of illness or death from the intense bitterness of the weather. He turned towards Cathleen, and spoke as she had not thought he could speak.

(To be continued.)

TAX ON BACHELORS.—M. Jullien, a merchant of Paris, has petitioned the French Senate to impose a special tax upon bachelors of 30 years and upwards.

PUNISHMENT OF A PRIEST FOR LIEB.—A young man of Greppen, in Switzerland, demanded the hand of a young woman of Argau in marriage. The family of the latter wrote to the curé of the parish to which the aspirant belonged, and the ecclesiastic sent so bad an account of the young man's morality that the alliance was broken off. The lover has since then prosecuted the priest for calumny, and the Tribunal has sentenced the latter to 10fr. fine, and to pay for

the insertion of the judgment in one of the Lucerne journals.

THREE HUMAN SKELETONS FOUND IN BLAIR CASTLE.—Considerable curiosity was excited in the neighbourhood of Blair Athole some time since on it becoming known that three human skeletons had been found in one of the vaults of Blair Castle, the residence of the Duke of Athole. It appears that several workmen came upon the skeletons while engaged in digging in one of the vaults in the southern part of the castle, for the purpose of forming a new cellar. The skeletons were buried about eighteen inches under the surface, and were the remains of full-grown men. The teeth of the skeleton first discovered are described as being as white as ivory. It bore no marks of violence; but the skeleton found next, which was the largest of the three, bore marks resembling sword cuts behind both ears. The third skeleton had no appearance of violent injury having been inflicted upon it. The Duke of Athole, who is at present residing at Blair Castle, took possession of the ghastly remains, and sent for Dr. Irvine to make an examination of them, with the view, if possible, of ascertaining how long they may have lain in the position in which they were found. We have not heard the result of Dr. Irvine's investigation, but the unusual circumstance has caused a good deal of speculation in the district.

A MAN'S LOYALTY.

No anger showed I, nor complaint;
My heart's beats shook no breath;
Although I knew that I had found
Her who brings life or death. Miss Muloch.

THE October suns had ripened and mellowed over Alderlea, and yet the summer party still lingered. Perhaps because September had been unusually warm, and Mrs. Alden had proved the most charming of hostesses.

Alderlea was a great, roomy, old stone house that had been in the Alden family for generations, and it seemed as if almost every owner had tried his hand at some architectural results, which made an odd, confused rambling mass. At last it had fallen into John Alden's hands.

"I really do not know what to do with it," he said, in his grave manner. "Being a family relic, I hate to sell it. If it were not such an out-of-the-way place I'd let it for an hotel. There's an abundance of hunting and fishing in the neighbourhood, but no society."

"John," his wife said, with a laugh, "I think I'll take it for the summer. We'll make up a party and go there. Who knows but it may bring it into repute?"

"You can't find a prettier place, if you do not find it lonely."

"We can try it for a few weeks, at all events."

When Mrs. Alden came to describe the place and its advantages to her friends, she found that she could very easily make up a party. Comfort was down largely in the programme. No strenuous efforts were to be made after fashion; but each one was to do pretty much as he or she pleased, provided they all added something to the general entertainment.

The gentlemen, it must be confessed, were quite taken with the project. Anything that promised unlimited ease and laziness, and no particular effort at playing the agreeable to the ladies suited them.

"But I must have some young ladies," Mrs. Alden said, very decisively.

"I don't see why. There's sure to be flirtations, rivalries, and—"

"You know, John," his pretty wife interrupted, "that if men couldn't flirt half the enjoyment of life would be over. I'm going to ask the most attractive girls I can find. There's Nora Gaylord, brimming over with fun and full of coquetry; and Helen Mordaunt, who sings divinely; and your handsome widow, Mrs. Carlyle. What a trio! I happen to know that they are all disengaged. And, John, I shall invite Stacy Meredith."

"Well, you will have the flirting element, indeed!" he exclaimed, with a prolonged whistle.

"And I daresay you'll make me jealous of the widow a dozen times," she replied, with an arch laugh.

"I advise you to be more afraid of Miss Meredith."

"Miss Meredith hasn't any heart, though she's a splendid and fascinating woman."

"I don't agree with you. She doesn't wear it on her sleeve, I grant, but if Stacy Meredith ever should fall in love—zounds! I should be half tempted to envy the man!"

"If she should!" and Mrs. Alden turned her half-smiling, half-doubtful eyes upon her husband. "Ah! John, that is what I do not believe she will ever do. Now I could imagine her marrying Mr. Castlemaine or Mark Beresford—"

"Castlemaine would be a good fellow, if he hadn't all that family pride. By the way, Sue, I will invite him, and give Miss Meredith a chance. But Mark?"

"Mark is wild, and carries on his dissipation in a most daring manner. He's generous, delightful company, and a gentleman."

So the party was made up without any difficulty. Mr. Castlemaine accepted a fortnight's invitation, and Mark Beresford invited himself. The four single ladies and about an equal number of married ones were to add their grace and beauty; and Mrs. Alden found that, innocently enough, she had made herself famous, and established a brilliant reputation for Alderlea.

Mr. Alden proposed another addition.

"I met Kirk Fordyce," he said, on his return one evening. "He's looking weary, and has been working himself half to death, but he has had a good offer to go abroad, and means to start as soon as he feels a little better. So I asked him to come up here and recruit."

"What a good brother he has been!" Mrs. Alden said, in a tone of admiration. "Annie and Nelly have never known a want. I hope he will be very, very prosperous. I'm sure he deserves the very best of fortunes. I'm glad you asked him, John."

Shortly after, Mr. Fordyce made his appearance. He was a man of thirty, with a full, well-developed figure, but rather thin now, and a good, honest face, noble rather than handsome. Blue eyes, a broad, open brow, chestnut hair with a slight inclination to curl, and a full brown beard, rather deeper than golden, a colour one meets with among the old painters. Indeed, Mrs. Carlyle said the only handsome feature in his face was his beard.

It must be confessed that Stacy Meredith was a good deal disappointed. The evening before Mr. Fordyce came she had been walking under the elms with John Alden, who had been discouraging rather eloquently upon his favourite. I can't tell what made him wish then and there to enlist Miss Meredith's sympathies, but he felt as if Kirk Fordyce must possess some subtle kinship with her. Descriptions of friends are always so over-wrought—we see them soul to soul, while a stranger beholds nothing but externals in a first interview.

And Mr. Fordyce certainly was not at his best estate. The languor and thinness gave him a kind of boyish look; there are some men who keep this all their lives. Then he smiled very readily, and with the smile there always came such a bright, earnest expression in his eyes.

He was not at all the hero she imagined. A life of devotion to an invalid mother, and the care of two dependent sisters, ought to have given him more gravity. Then his hard fight with the world had left no trace at all.

Ah, Miss Meredith, he had learned some of life's grandest lessons. To labour early and late; to bear disappointments, slights, and deeper pains, and make no weak means; to show no cruel wound where some unexpected neglect had been keener than a sword's thrust, but hide these things in the brave and generous heart, and be bright and happy for those at home, cheering his mother till the very latest moment, and never allowing his fond sisters to experience the burthen of dependence.

He glanced now and then at Miss Meredith. Somehow he had a little of John Alden's feeling that he and this cool, stately woman were of some kin, and would be drawn together by a fine, invisible bond. Two or three times he had sketched such women, moving like heroines about the world, and yet holding themselves aloof from its grosser elements—women of large brains and pure souls, hard to win, but doubly sweet, doubly precious when won.

I suppose Miss Meredith had sufficient beauty to be pronounced handsome. Some people raved about her, others wondered how she had ever gained such a reputation. She possessed a tall, elegant figure, faultless complexion, and a perfect hand and foot.

Her face was not purely oval, nor her nose purely Grecian, yet both did very well. Her mouth was lovely at times, but it often settled into a cold, disdainful expression.

Kirk Fordyce thought her beautiful.

By degrees all the women began to assimilate with him and admire him very cordially. Mr. Castlemaine was so lofty that no one except Nora Gaylord dared take any liberties with him, and Mark Beresford was such a lazy fellow that if anyone asked him to do a favour he rang the bell for a servant. Mr. Fordyce, after the first few days, began to improve in health and spirits, sparred with Nora, sang with Miss Mordaunt, and became a great favourite with the married women.

The three men, after their own fashion, were in love with Miss Meredith. It certainly was not because she had taken any pains to attract them, or that Nora and Mrs. Carlyle had failed to render

themselves fascinating. They all thought, that is, the clear-eyed, discerning married ladies, that Miss Mordaunt was in a fair way to become Mrs. Castlemaine. Mrs. Alden felt rather disappointed, for, liking Stacy so well, she was anxious that her favourite should be elegantly established in life.

But this October afternoon, when Mr. Castlemaine asked Stacy to take a ramble in the little woods with him, called thus to distinguish them from the great belt of timber that ran half around the Alderlea estate, he had a plan in his mind; while to her it seemed a most accidental circumstance. Finding her alone under the willow at the entrance of the summer-house, he asked, very gaily for him, if she had been deserted?

"No," Miss Meredith replied. "I saw this spot from my window, and it was such a lovely picture that I came out to have a nearer view."

Stacy Meredith rose and put on her hat.

They walked in the hazy, golden sunshine, or turned to the shade that was aloft with filmy radiance. Here a squirrel chattered from a branching chestnut tree, or one ran along the cushion of moss at their feet. Beyond lay the broad bay, placidly steeped in the glittering haze. It was so tranquil, so lovely! It touched her with a deep reverential feeling.

They talked rather slowly about it; in fact, she did not care to talk at all. It seemed to her that Mr. Castlemaine was nervous, and she wished herself alone, that she might enjoy the rare beauty.

"Miss Meredith," he began, presently, in a more assured tone.

She read his motive in his face, and was her cool, stately self in an instant.

"I admire and esteem you very much. Will you be mine, my wife?"

He stood before her, gracious, kindly, self-possessed. His wife would have an easy, happy life, with a true and tender husband, a luxurious home, and servants "to come at her lightest word." A fortunate woman the world would pronounce her.

"I think I can make you happy," he continued. "At least, it would be my earnest endeavour to do so."

She roused herself from her abstraction with an effort, for she seemed to have drifted far away.

"I am sorry, Mr. Castlemaine, for I have been thinking of you only as a friend—"

"Oh, Miss Meredith, do not say that it is impossible for you to love me."

Mr. Castlemaine looked very, very much astonished. The idea of any woman rejecting him had never once entered his mind.

"Forgive me the pain I must cause you, Mr. Castlemaine; you are really too good and noble to be married for your position or your wealth. You are worthy of some woman's highest love, and when you clasp her brave and true heart to your own, you will thank me for not being won by any other motive."

She looked so lovely and womanly as she uttered this, that it was hard to relinquish her, yet he was quick too proud to sue when she had said that she did not love him.

They walked back side by side in silence.

"Let us be friends, Mr. Castlemaine."

He took her hand and bowed politely over it.

Miss Mordaunt was singing in the parlour. An odd fancy led Stacy Meredith's steps to the end of the hall, and from thence to the billiard-room. Mr. Beresford was reclining on the sofa.

"Oh, Miss Meredith, take pity on me, for a familiar face is a perfect godsend. Fordyce has taken off Mrs. Carlyle, and Nora has quarrelled shamefully with me, and even Mrs. Alden refused to save me from a fit of the blues."

"Which you must have had very badly."

"Miss Meredith, do you think me a heartless fellow, like the rest of the world?"

She gave him a peculiar smile. She was in one of the moods that always pleased Mrs. Alden—when she grew prettier every moment.

"Mr. Beresford, any man can save himself who will."

He blushed perceptibly.

"Mrs. Alden was recommending matrimony to me awhile ago. It seems to me that a really noble wife might be able to do a great deal for her husband."

"Men being so particularly amenable to good advice."

And she laughed, rather scornfully.

"It's more influence than advice that we need," he returned, slowly. "I daresay most of the women among whom I should be likely to marry would be devoted to fashion and love of display, and hate to be restricted in the slightest matter. So I should follow the same gay, careless life, never making the world any better for my having entered it. But sometimes I have a sort of dim consciousness that a human soul is worthy of higher care."

"I think it is, Mr. Beresford."

He rose and came towards her. There was a flash

upon his brow, and a strange expression of entreaty in his eye. His voice had lost its usual gay assurance, as he said:

"Miss Meredith—Stacy—I wish you would do this for me—help me to make a man of myself, let me be redeemed by your love!"

She arose haughtily.

"Mr. Beresford," she exclaimed, with an indignation that made her look only the more beautiful and spirited, "you forget to whom you are speaking!"

"Do I? No! To me you have come to be the embodiment of a higher womanhood than any I have believed in hitherto."

"That would be one objection to me, Mr. Beresford. I believe men of your stamp consider it a duty or a right to make love to every woman they chance to meet."

"I never asked a woman to be my wife, Miss Meredith. I've played only that sort of give and take game they are ready to engage in—flirtation, but heaven will bear me witness that I never broke any tender, loving heart. I am not so bad as you believe me to be."

"I decline your honour, Mr. Beresford, simply because I do not love you."

"I have made a miserable idiot of myself!" he said, angrily, when alone. "Well, let her laugh; there are hundreds of women who will listen and sigh."

Miss Meredith went swiftly to her room, wondering what had suddenly turned the brains of these men. How odd that both should have loved her; the men being so dissimilar.

Mark Beresford took a long, hard gallop and cooled his temper; Mr. Castlemaine listened to Helen Mordaunt's singing, and came to the comforting conclusion that there was more than one woman in the world. She was so gentle and deferential to him, which soothed his wounded self-love.

That evening he was devoted to her, while Mark flirted with Nora. Stacy Meredith felt more angry than hurt at her recreant knights. How much honour and loyalty was there in any man's soul?

This evening the coast was clear for Mr. Fordyce, but Stacy Meredith chased him with the rest. He begged her for a song presently, and turned over the leaves until he came to a favourite.

"If you will sing this," he said, beseechingly.

"To Mr. Castlemaine and Mark Beresford," she thought; and she said aloud, "I am not in the humour for that. Here is something to which I can do better justice."

She sang in the lightest, faintest of voices:

"Oh, love is like the rose,
And a month it may not see
Do it withers where it blows,
Ere it is!"

It was a very peculiar evening. Everyone yielded to some indescribable mesmeric power. Miss Meredith was brilliant, daring, fascinating to the utmost extreme, and yet, if you can understand it, unapproachable. But Kirk Fordyce felt that his hours were numbered. On the morrow he must leave Alderlea.

"Miss Meredith, do you know that your song was cruel?" Mr. Fordyce said, when they were apart from the others.

"Was it?" she replied, in a sweet silvery tone. "Candour compels me to state that it is true, nevertheless."

"Miss Meredith," he said, in a brave, clear tone, "I love you, I worship you! The first time I saw you standing in yonder room, I understood what my life lacked, and how it could be supplied. I could not leave you without uttering this truth. I am going away for three years, and when I return I hope to have something worthier to offer for your acceptance, as the world counts worth, but never a truer heart. Will you, can you try me?"

"Three years! you count on a long constancy, Mr. Fordyce."

Her tone was sharp, doubting, and dashed with irony.

"Because I trust you."

"As if I might not crumble to the dust like other false idols!"

"No, I think you understand yourself well enough to keep any promise you might give to a man."

"And the man's honour would last—a month!"

She laughed scornfully.

"Will you try mine?"

"The love of a few weeks!"

"The love of a lifetime!"

Something in the grand and noble tone touched her deeply, but she was in a most perverse mood. He could not have chanced upon a more inauspicious season.

They turned and walked slowly onward, silent for awhile as the shadows of the fragrant night.

"You may think me daring to presumption, Miss Meredith; but I feel that I shall have a position and a name that no woman need be ashamed of."

"It would be for an empty hope!" she said.

"What shall I do to convince you?" and there was a tone of perplexity in his voice. "I think some day you will do me justice. Give me but one anchor for faith—the right to win you at last?"

"You are a generous lover, Mr. Fordyce," she said, loftily.

He smiled in reply. Her heart was warming towards him unconsciously. If he had pleaded a little longer he might have taken some comfort with him, but his was a faith to be proved by deeds rather than words alone. And she in her haughty pride let him go.

Kirk Fordyce made the first break. He came down to breakfast bright and buoyant. He announced his departure for that day. Mr. Alden opposed it warmly.

There began a general confusion after this, everybody packing up, discussing winter plans and amusements. And it came out that Miss Mordaunt and Mr. Castlemaine were engaged, and that the sharp Mark Beresford had been caught by the pretty Nora. "Mark!" John Alden exclaimed, bluntly. "If it had been Miss Meredith I would have congratulated you."

"You see it isn't," and Mark gave a slow whistle, looking over the hills with dreamy eyes.

At Christmas Mark and Nora were married in grand style. His mother was not at all satisfied, but she made the best of it, as mothers are wont to do when their sons are dearly loved.

Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine took matters in a quiet, elegant style, and were the envy of the little world in which they moved. Before spring Mrs. Carlyle had entered the bonds a second time, and of the Alderlea party only Stacy Meredith remained.

Through the Aldens she heard occasionally of Fordyce. He was well and prosperous. Sometimes she wondered that he did not venture to write, and in her heart upbraided him for an indifferent lover. She was tiring of the idleness, the gaiety, the sameness of society, and in some moods and moments felt like donning a nun's dress, and going forth to the poor and needy.

There came few changes to the circle of friends in which she moved. Only one that was important. The bright, wilful, daring Nora had been carried to the churchyard in great pomp and state seven months after her marriage.

She had quarrelled with her husband about a horse that she desired to drive, a beautiful, spirited creature, with half-savage moods, and one day during his absence, had accomplished her daring feat. Elated with her success, and the fact of her having attracted much attention, she became a trifle careless as she was nearing home, and the horse, frightened by a group of noisy children following a noisier drummer, dashed off again at full speed. In vain the driver, whom she had taken with her for prudence sake, a new hand, endeavoured to check the wild thing. As they turned a corner, Nora was thrown, and carried home insensible.

When the tidings reached Mark Beresford he fairly raved. Before he entered the house he ordered the horse to be sold, though he had taken great pride in its possession. But when he saw poor Nora, and heard the doctor's fiat that she might linger a week or two, his heart melted. He had tried to make up for lack of love by indulgence, but now he would have given half his fortune if he could go back to Alderlea before the day on which he had asked Nora to marry him.

"Oh," she said, some time after, when she could talk a little, "there are two things I must ask of you, Mark, my darling. Forgiveness for having brought this great calamity upon you, and that you will send for Stacy Meredith."

"Why Stacy Meredith?"

And his brow became cloudy.

"I want her. It will not be for long."

So Miss Meredith came, and at the last Nora died in her arms. Stacy learned that she had done Mark great injustice. There was something better in the man than she had believed.

The furniture was sold, the house let, the stables that had been his pride vacated, and Mark Beresford took his mother with him to Italy. Everyone declared him broken-hearted. He came to say goodbye to Miss Meredith before he started, a sad-eyed man, but looking the handsomer for all his sorrow.

"Miss Meredith," he said, huskily, "I am more used to granting than asking favours, as you well know, but if you would allow me to write to you now and then? I'll promise not to bore you. As you once said, a man can save himself, and I've resolved to set about it."

"Yes," she returned, "but do not rate my services too highly."

He smiled gravely, but did not stoop to idle compliment, as he might have done in past days.

He kept his word, and did not trouble her often; his letters were serious experiences, unless here and



[THE EXPLANATION.]

there something unusual roused him into description. And when two years had passed, he returned a better and nobler man, with one settled aim in his heart—to win Stacy Meredith.

This autumn came in unusually early, and was cold. By October, nearly all the birds of passage were settled in their winter homes. Miss Meredith has listened to Mrs. Alden's persuasions, and had become domesticated with them. Mark Beresford had reopened his house with his mother at its head, and was already the speculation of numerous belles. She saw him frequently, for he and John Alden were choice friends.

"It will all come right yet," Mrs. Alden said, triumphantly.

In the meanwhile Stacy Meredith was in a strange state notwithstanding her calm face, and low, even voice. Day by day she watched with an expectation that amounted almost to pain. How much did she love, or how little? Could she reward the faith of the absent with her whole soul?

They had all been invited to a dinner at the Beresford mansion, a kind of informal party, very pleasant nevertheless. Glancing down the table, Miss Meredith saw the familiar faces of her Alderlea summer. Another person saw them as well.

"Isn't it odd, Alden," a friend said, "that nearly the old Alderlea party should be here?" and then he checked himself, remembering the ill-fated Nora. "By the way I see that Fordyce has returned. Beresford, you should have asked him."

"I wonder that he did not come directly here," Mr. Alden said, rather puzzled.

"Oh, his sisters were telegraphed to, and started this morning. I hear that he has been appointed to a foreign embassy, and I should not be surprised if he went away again, immediately."

This time Stacy turned positively cold. To be forgotten! She knew then what manner of edifice she

had reared on the foundation of this man's faith. To be trifled with or deceived was the one thing Stacy Meredith could not endure.

They left the table at length. Miss Meredith was glad to stray to some quiet nook and think—of what, indeed? That she had kept her faith for three years, and had been trifled with at the last.

A step startled her. She had grown strangely nervous and fearful, almost as if she expected to see—but it was only Mark Beresford.

"I am glad to find you here," he exclaimed, in a low tone.

She did not answer, but blushed a little.

"When someone spoke of Alderlea to-night, it took me back to old times, and, Stacy, old dreams, old wishes. I have begun to hope—"

"No, don't," she interrupted.

"Why—Stacy?"

"Because—Oh, don't try me, don't let me pain you, for every word is a stab to myself," and she raised her pleading eyes.

"And you are engaged to Kirk Fordyce?"

"Hardly that. He was so confident of himself, of me. I promised to wait."

A subtle temptation flashed through Mark Beresford's mind. He loved Stacy Meredith with all the depth and fervour of a strong nature. Win her he must before his rival came.

"And he seems in no haste to seek you. Do you think I could have been kept from the woman I loved? Oh, Stacy, what is his faith, his longing, compared to mine? I have tried to make myself a better man for your sake. I lay it all at your feet now, my love, my very life, and all that I have. Oh, my-darling, be merciful!"

Stacy's head swam round. If she cared to punish Mr. Fordyce for his tardiness, one word, nay, even a gesture, would do it all. For a moment she almost yielded

"You will be mine?" and Beresford's tone was one of tender triumph. He would have clasped her to his heart, but she drew back, not haughtily, yet with a grave sweet dignity.

"No," she made answer; "let me be true to myself first. I think I did love him then, more than I realised, and I have brooded over fond dreams of him since. I believe I doubted all men at that time; but I know now that there is some brave truth, some sweet fidelity. My faith belongs to Kirk Fordyce."

"And if he prove recreant?"

"I cannot look beyond that, to-night."

They went back to the guests, but to both, perhaps, the charm of the evening was lost. And though Beresford made himself entertaining, he rather shunned Stacy.

She lived through another day in breathless expectation. Hardly confessing how deep her disappointment was. This evening they were engaged for the opera, which, being Mrs. Alden's favourite amusement, she was in a high state of delight.

Miss Meredith looked very lovely in her stately womanly grace.

"There's Kirk Fordyce, I'm sure, John," said Mrs. Alden, leaning over to her husband. "Just entering—see! How handsome he's grown. Going abroad always improves people."

Stacy did not stir, she hardly breathed. She felt her hands growing icy cold.

"Stacy, Mr. Fordyce is looking this way—bowing to us all."

She leaned over a little, but did not move her eyes. If he wanted to watch her from this distance—well.

"I'd like to beckon him over here. Just see how gay everyone is about him. John, won't you go and bring him over?"

Stacy put out her hand involuntarily. Could she have him brought?

"Why, Stacy! you're not going to faint? You are as pale as a ghost."

"No," Miss Meredith said, in a firm, cold tone.

And then she was herself again, except that the lights, the music, and the number of faces, were one confused mass.

Some time afterwards, it might have been five minutes, or an hour, Mr. Fordyce was there, receiving Mrs. Alden's congratulations. Miss Meredith bowed, smiled and gave him her cold hand. Then the curtain fell amid prolonged applause, and a buzz of eager tongues succeeded. There was one act more, and the crowd began to disperse. Opposite, Mark Beresford's deep eyes questioned gloomily. Should she summon him?

Mr. Fordyce just touched her hand. There was a strange power about the man, a kind of easy, free, exultant life that inspired those with whom he came in contact. A man who would leave his impress anywhere.

They walked out of the box together, through the passage. John Alden glanced back and said:

"Fordyce, take good care of Miss Meredith," and then their eyes met for the first time. There was in his such a longing, such a sense of passionate pain, that she stopped and blushed deeply.

"Oh," he said, "I have no right—I knew a month ago that you were no longer free—but I have kept my faith, and must hold it to my life's end. No other woman can ever fill your place."

"Free!" she echoed in surprise.

"Yes. Forgive my one weak cry. I loved you so."

She was strong enough then, and she knew what Kirk Fordyce was to her.

"I, too, have kept my faith with you," she answered, proudly.

"Stacy!"

They clasped hands in the crowd, for no farther explanations were needed.

At the carriage door another voice greeted Fordyce. Was there a suppressed gasp of anguish in its depths? He leaned over to Stacy, his handsome face calm and pale—Mark Beresford giving up his last hope.

"I think you will be happy," he said, in a whisper. "You have taught me how to save myself, and you will never regret your trouble."

Ten minutes' talk between Stacy and her lover explained all. He had heard of her engagement with Beresford, though he could scarcely believe it.

"How odd!" was Mrs. Alden's surprised exclamation. "I felt almost sure, that summer, that you would marry Castlemaine or Beresford."

Mark Beresford is still the centre of an admiring circle, a true, tender, and honourable man. Now and then his friends wonder that he does not marry, but one woman holds the secret of his soul. And Nora, sleeping in the quiet grave, for her sake he cherishes more tenderly the memory of her brief life. There are some uncrowned victors in the world.

A. M. D.



[THE ASSASSIN.]

THE PHANTOM OF MARION.

CHAPTER XX.

COLONEL LE FONTAINE, accompanied by his faithful valet, had accomplished their long journey without any incident of importance, and in due time reached London in perfect safety.

A change had come over the young soldier, which was painfully noticeable. He had had a dream, a sweet dream, tinged with the most beautiful, and most delusive of life varied experiences; he had dwelt, as it were, above the earth, where the sun seemed to shine more brilliantly, where the air was balmy and laden with heavenly odours, where the lovely and variegated flowers bloomed and blushed with more and delicate magnificence, where the plumed songsters carolled forth dulcet notes of exquisite and rapturous melody, and where life itself was invested with delicious harmony, elevating love, and supreme contentment.

This vision—for it was a fleeting vision—had seemed to develop the nobler, finer, and more sensitive feelings of his nature, which, under the genial and life-inspiring rays of the azure orbs that flooded his being with liquid, mellow light, had bloomed and expanded until he felt himself a new man, and the new emotions had opened his heart to a brighter and diviner life, until his whole being seemed to overflow in appreciation of heaven's works, and kinder feelings towards his fellow-men.

But alas, it had passed; it was but a chimera—a will-o'-the-wisp—an *ignis fatuus*—that had deluded him, which had dilated his heart, and then left it to snap from its elasticity; which had brought forth the better qualities of his nature only to warm them and then left them to sower and wither from their brittleness, and which had shown him purer life, only to deceive him, that he might mock at it.

Yes, Colonel Le Fontaine had learned a bitter lesson, and one that had produced an immediate and radical change in his character and actions. Where before had dwelt love, now reposed cynicism; mildness was now supplanted by severity; mirth by gravity; a pleasant volubility by taciturnity, and freedom by reserve.

He remained in London but a short time, and then proceeded to Paris, and although his furlough had not expired, rejoined his regiment, and once more coned his uniform and sword, which, from motives of modesty and a dislike of show, he had not worn while on his tour.

On the evening of which I write, Colonel Le Fon-

tain sat in a *cave*, a half-finished glass of wine before him, and a fragrant Havana between his lips, while, as the filmy folds of the odoriferous vapour coiled around him, he gazed upon it abstractedly, and as it vanished, compared it to his hopes—to his life.

He had been thinking of Alice, and wondering if she still loved him, or if time had served to deaden her affection. The latter thought he could not—would not harbour, for in his heart there still existed a faint, shadowy hope, that seemed to ameliorate in a measure the intensity of his grief. Although he had grown stoical, yet the feelings of his heart he could not subdue, for notwithstanding the mind be strong, the heart, when fully imbued with feeling, will baffle the mind in its attempt to crush it for years, and sometimes for a lifetime. At last, growing weary of the hum of conversation which grated harshly upon his ear, and desiring solitude, he arose and passed out into the street.

With his mind fully occupied in reflecting upon the bright vista of the past, and the dull, cold, and dreary present, he walked moodily on, not knowing, nor caring whither he went. He desired to absent himself from society and the sight of human beings, to be alone, with his thoughts for his only companions, and bitter—ah, too bitter were they.

At last he raised his eyes and found himself near the banks of the Seine, in a remote, unfrequented, and dangerous part of the city. But he cared not, and once again placing his hand in his breast he resumed his meditation and moved slowly and carelessly along.

Suddenly his cogitation was broken in upon by hearing a heavy, hasty step in front of him. He looked up. Before him slowly rose a tall, muffled figure, which advanced with a firm, stealthy tread.

He placed his hand upon his sword, coolly regarded the apparition, and waited for farther developments.

Throwing the cloak which concealed his form from view quickly aside, the man sprang forward, drew a massive blade, and placing himself directly in the soldier's path, exclaimed, in a gruff voice of angry exaltation:

"Ha! we meet at last! Draw, defend yourself, or die!"

"Who are you—why do you seek my life?" exclaimed the colonel, as his sword leaped from its scabbard and was crossed with that of his unknown enemy.

"It matters not who I am," returned the unknown, in a savage voice, "I am here to slay you—to crimson my sword to the hilt with your heart's blood, and it shall be done!"

"There are two chances, my man!" retorted the

colonel, as he cautiously guarded his sword, to ascertain the powers of his opponent, and, after a few moments of feints, and quick trial blows, knew that he had an accomplished fencer to deal with.

"Take that and die, curse you!" hissed the unknown, as he made a fierce counter-thrust at the officer, which, however, was skillfully parried.

Cool, calm, and vigilant, and a perfect master of the sword, the young chasseur turned aside every dart of his opponent's flashing rapier, and although he had frequent opportunity to end his life, forbore, that he might, if possible, learn his motive for the assault.

"Now this play shall cease!" ejaculated the mask, raining a perfect shower of blows upon the soldier's blade, which clinked and rasped, and echoed through the darkness with a dismal sound.

"Aye, and soon!" replied the colonel, as he warded the fast falling strokes, and catching the point of his blade in the hilt of that of his enemy, he gave a violent twist, and hurled it from his hand into space.

"Fiends and furies!" grasped the unknown, in accents of rage. "But I will yet conquer!" and he retreated a few steps.

The colonel advanced, and was about to end his life, when another sword mysteriously came into his hand, and he again furiously advanced to the combat.

"Fool, do you court death?" thundered the officer, growing excited, as their weapons glinted, clashed, and sent sparks around them.

"I court your death—ah, and I'll have it!" howled his enemy, beginning a more vigorous and determined attack.

"I would have spared you!" retorted the soldier, with increasing wrath, "but now your portion is death!" and, with these words, he parried a blow aimed at his right breast, made a feint towards the other's heart, and then, with a quick, masterly sweep, drew the blood from his enemy's left shoulder, and returned his blade to a guard in an instant.

The unknown, excited by constant defeat, impelled by hatred, and now enraged by the wound in his shoulder, uttered a cry of revenge, and leaping towards his adversary, whirled his sword in the air, and sought to cleave the colonel's neck.

The young officer divined his intention, and throwing his sword up, received the full force of the blow upon it, then quickly turning, made a counter-thrust, and drew the blood from his opponent's right shoulder.

"Imps of torture, what ails my sword?" shouted the mask, maddened by pain. "Curse on you, but I'll have your dastard life—come on again—and let his blood turn to poison who first shall quail!"

"Let it be so, for I will drive you into the Seine, you coward!" exclaimed the chasseur, furiously advancing, while his blade flashed like a meteor through the air.

"Accused be that hand that fails me!" cried the unknown, as his second sword was stricken from his grasp.

Again the colonel dashed forward, and again he was met with the blade which his aggressor seemed to pluck from the earth or air.

With increasing anger the two men resumed the contest: now parrying a well-aimed blow—now guarding to the left—now to the right—then up, then down, the terrible contest continued with unabated fury, while the keen blades flashed under the light that dotted the far-off waters, and clicked, grated, and snapped, and the sparks flew, and the jingling of the furious metals as they crashed together, sounded far on the quiet waters of the Seine.

Nearly wild with chagrin and ferocity, the unknown slashed and cut the air like a maniac, while terrible oaths fell from his lips, and he trembled with rage.

During one of these blind and reckless passes the colonel saw his advantage, and turning the point of his enemy's sword aside, drove a furious lunge at his heart—but horror of horror, instead of entering, the young officer's sword was severed. For an instant he stood bewildered, then drawing his revolver, fired.

As he did so his arm was struck aside, a heavy blade descended upon his head, and he sank insensible to the earth.

An instant more and his late adversary approached. Placing one foot upon the gallant soldier's breast, and gazing upon him with a fiendish expression of diabolical joy, he exclaimed, in a voice cutting with madness:

"Ha, ha! At last I have triumphed, now upon thy detested carcass I crush my foot! If one breath of life remains it shall be blown out of thee!"

And drawing a revolver, he placed it against the inanimate brow, and with eyes fiercely gleaming, prepared to fire.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. RICHARD SHREWDER, the worthy plotter and crafty lawyer, sat in his large arm-chair, with his head resting upon his hand, in an attitude of deep thought, while ever and anon he pushed his fingers through his hair, that glossy curly hair, which drooped so fondly around his red, wrinkled face and was such a prominent part of his smiling, deceiving countenance.

Since Lady Beauford's last visit, the smirking attorney had been rather perturbed in mind. Her ominous words seemed continually ringing in his ears, and often caused him an involuntary shudder, and to annul the effects of these unpleasant mental visitants, he had entered into his schemes with renewed energy, and a sort of desperate earnestness, supported by a fixed determination to succeed at all hazards.

This morning he was rather restless and nervous, and was annoyed by suspense, for he was anxiously awaiting the arrival of one on whom much depended, and with regard to whose coming, he had experienced many sensations of apprehension, which, though vague, were powerful enough to keep his expectant mind in a constant turmoil of feverish anticipation.

A half-hour passed, at the end of which time the door opened; quickly changing his position, the attorney surveyed the new-comer with a frown of displeasure, and then gave forth a long respiration indicative of relief from his mental oppression. As he again looked up, his eyes rested upon an uncouth, green specimen of humanity, whom the reader will at once recognise as the idiot of the vale.

Mr. Shrewder's eyes opened very wide, and raising his hands to the arm-holes of his vest, and bending forward, while his mouth was distended, and his face wore a look of curiosity and indignation intermingled, he exclaimed:

"What the deuce, Jasper, have you there?"

Mr. Jasper Kingsbury smiled, and condescendingly replied:

"An idiot, sir."

"An idiot!" shouted Mr. Shrewder, his wrath rising—"and what in the name of all the saints, have you brought him here for?"

"For an office boy," responded Jasper, with an air of nonchalance.

"An office boy!" gasped the attorney, directing a glance of quizzical anger at him. "An office boy, did you say? Demme, sir, I believe you are a lunatic yourself! The idea, sir, the asked idea, is enough to set a man of ordinary sense by the ears, and you bring him to me—to me—a member of Her Majesty's bar? Hang me, sir, do you take me for a fool?" he

concluded, bringing his hands furiously together, while he scowled at Jasper from beneath his shaggy brows.

"I really hope," began Mr. Kingsbury, "I really hope you won't get into a passion."

"Passion, sir, passion? A rabbit would get into a passion; and, choke me, sir, if you are blockhead enough to bring him in here, I'm not fool enough to let him stay. Demme, sir, do you take this office for a lunatic asylum?"

Mr. Kingsbury retreated towards the door, while an uneasy expression rested upon his features, and he sought to push the idiot behind him. The latter, not particularly pleased with this mode of treatment, burst forth with:

"Tich noong pooch!"

"There, you hear, sir, you hear," screamed Mr. Shrewder, in exasperation, "you hear his wild, savage grunting! He's a beast, sir, a beast, and you dare to bring him into my office—you're a—demme, sir, I don't know what you are—but I think—I do, sir, that you've got your brother with you."

And wiping the perspiration from his brow, the lawyer stood trembling with passion, and glaring angrily at the dancing idiot.

"Now, Mr. Shrewder," resumed Jasper, conciliatingly, "if you will only allow me to tell you of his qualities."

"Qualities, sir, qualities of an idiot?" thundered the attorney, bringing an ebony ruler down upon the desk with a resounding crash. "Why don't you talk to me about the eloquence of a jackdaw, or the profundity of a donkey! Zounds, sir, have you lost the worthless remnant of common sense that you once possessed? You act like a lunatic—like an ape, sir, and I want you to take that briarly hedgehog out of my office, sir, immediately, sir, before I kick you both out!" and overcome by the violence of his vocal exertions, Mr. Shrewder sank back into his chair, breathing very heavily.

Mr. Kingsbury was fully convinced that it would be worse than useless to attempt to impress upon the mind of his worthy patron, in its present state, the useful qualities of the idiot, and motioning the latter to retire, Jasper came forward, and took a seat by the side of the irate attorney.

"Now, sir," began Mr. Shrewder, after a lapse of five minutes, during which time he had been struggling to regain his self-possession. "Now, sir, report, and see that it is favourable, and demme, sir, don't bring any more monkeys or lunatics into this office, except yourself."

"I will give you a concise account of my adventures," returned Mr. Kingsbury. "One week ago, to-night, I, along with three of my friends, followed the colonel to the banks of the Seine. I had a desperate sword fight with him, and if it had not been for my steel vest, he would have killed me, but his sword snapped, and drawing a pistol, he fired at me. At that moment, one of my companions struck him a terrific blow upon the head, which, I think, must have fractured his skull. To be sure that he was dead, I bent down, and was about to put a bullet through his head, when two *gens d'armes* appeared."

"And you failed?" shrieked the attorney, leaping to his feet, and uttering an awful oath. "You failed again—Oh! you blockhead you—you—what next, go on, go on, I say!"

"Don't get excited, sir, there's no occasion for it. I was about to say that we left the spot with all possible haste, and managed to escape."

"And the colonel is still alive?" queried Mr. Shrewder, tremulously.

"No such thing. I am happy to inform you that he died the next morning in consequence of a fractured skull."

"Are you sure?" quoth the attorney, with a gleam of evil pleasure in his eye.

"There is the notice of his death," replied Jasper, "you can read for yourself," and he threw the *Times* upon the desk, which his companion eagerly grasped.

As he perused the paragraph, his face became bright with an expression of heathenish satisfaction. As he finished, he placed the paper in his pocket, and ejaculated in low tones of malicious gratification:

"You've done well, Jasper; so far, so good; now for the other, and then our trials are ended; how about Margery?"

"She is buried!" he answered, with hilarity.

"Buried?" echoed the attorney. "You don't say so; I'm beginning to feel easy; tell me all about it."

"Well, the idiot and Margery lived together in a dirty street near Piccadilly. I got acquainted with the old woman, and paid so much attention to the idiot, that she came to like me. I had not wasted time and money upon the idiot for nothing, and at last gave him to understand that I desired to do away with Margery. After some exertion I brought him round to my way of thinking, and a night was agreed upon when the work should be done. The night

came, and I accomplished the deed with my own hand; the next day she was buried, and I had the pleasure of attending her funeral."

"Did you see her in the coffin?" asked Mr. Shrewder, determined to be sure.

"Certainly I did, and saw the coffin put into the ground. Is that satisfactory?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," answered Mr. Shrewder, rubbing his hands gleefully; "you have acquitted yourself nobly, Jasper, nobly."

"And now, squire, I want you to favour me a little."

"What is it?" queried the attorney, becoming suddenly reserved, as men are apt to do when requested to give rather than take.

"Why, the idiot—"

"Obtuse the idiot; don't make a fool of yourself, Jasper, don't," speculated the attorney.

"Be patient a moment, and hear me through," continued Mr. Kingsbury. "If you imagine that that poor boy has no intellect, you are vastly mistaken."

"That poor boy," repeated the lawyer, sneeringly. "You would do away with him for fifty pounds."

"You, or you either, as to that matter," replied the practical Mr. Kingsbury.

"Oh—what—don't talk so, Jasper, you know I'm very nervous," mumbled the lawyer, moving uneasily in his chair.

"Well, then, don't call me hard names, and scoff at what I say," replied Jasper, determined to pursue his advantage.

"If you must have your own way, what about him?"

"This much about him," rejoined Jasper, sternly: "that he is as strong as a lion, and would be a valuable watch-dog for your place; for you know, you have some papers here which it would not benefit you to lose."

"Very true. I've been thinking of getting a watch-dog, but perhaps this idiot will do as well. What other qualities has he?"

"He is gifted with second-sight," answered Jasper, confidentially.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Shrewder.

"Fact, and I will prove it to you. Before we came here to-day, he began striking his fists, and uttering in loud, angry tones, unintelligible words. In short he described your actions exactly; that is, as well as pantomimic action can describe anything."

"Wonderful—wonderful!" mused the attorney. "I wish you had not sent him away."

"He probably lingers near," responded Jasper, rising as he spoke. "I will try and find him."

In a moment he returned in company with the object which was formerly detestable to Mr. Shrewder, but which, by the remarkable revelations concerning him, had now changed to one of wonder and admiration.

Motioning the idiot to a chair, Mr. Kingsbury advanced, and resumed his seat by the side of the attorney.

Presently the idiot arose, drew a coarse handkerchief from one of his capacious pockets, and threw it over his head.

"Watch him!" said Jasper, touching his companion.

"I will, I will!" replied Mr. Shrewder, gazing with interest upon the strange object before him.

The idiot now moved towards the desk, grasped a ruler, and taking it in his right hand, held it over his head at an angle of forty-five degrees, in much the same manner as a female would a parasol; then throwing back his head, and giving a gentle rocking motion to his body, he walked the room for a moment in imitation of an arrogant woman.

"He mimics a lady—capital, capital," said Mr. Shrewder, approvingly.

"Don't move your eyes," cautioned Jasper; "we shall soon know by his actions who it is."

The idiot advanced, drew a chair to the side of the attorney, and, after assuming as nearly as possible the position of a lady, threw back his substitute for a veil with a movement of graceful dignity, then slowly moved his head, and turned his eyes with a cold, contemptuous glance towards the lawyer.

The latter started, and exclaimed in astonishment: "Lady Beauford, by all that's grand. It could not have been acted better upon the stage."

"Watch him," replied Jasper, admiringly.

Having gone through with several grimaces and gesticulations, in exact imitation of Lady Beauford, the idiot paused, drew his handkerchief from his head and made a knot at each corner. Then emptying a box of snuff into the receptacle thus made, turned again towards Mr. Shrewder and poured them into the hand which the latter held out.

"Do you see—don't you understand?" chuckled Mr. Kingsbury, with enthusiasm. "He imitates Lady Beauford in the act of paying you."

"Yes, yes; he's a treasure, that he is!" shouted

Mr. Shrewder, with delight. "He can tell me anything I may wish to know with regard to my clients. I wish I could beg his pardon for my rudeness."

"Offer him your hand after he gets over the influence," suggested Jasper; "that will make him a friend to you at once."

Again they directed their attention towards the idiot, who closed his eyes, and, for a moment, remained perfectly still; then his limbs began to shake violently, his facial muscles to twitch nervously, and he leaped to his feet, trembled for a moment, and again resumed his wonted looks.

Mr. Shrewder arose, and, with a pleasant smile, stretched forth his hand. The idiot grasped and shook it with every pantomimic expression of gladness and reconciliation.

Mr. Shrewder resumed his seat, and glancing at his watch, remarked:

"Why, it's half-past ten. Lady Beauford will be here in half-an-hour. I do not wish you to be present. Come again this afternoon, and you shall have your money."

As Mr. Kingsbury moved towards the door, the idiot arose also, but upon receiving from Mr. Shrewder a motion deprecating of the intended action, he resumed his seat.

Punctually at eleven o'clock Lady Beauford entered the apartment. After a few scornful remarks with regard to the idiot, she listened to Mr. Shrewder, who repeated to her the statements made by Jasper. As he finished she shuddered slightly, a peculiar paleness overspread her features, and then, after a moment's silence, she requested his bill.

He named two thousand pounds. She made no objection to the extortion, but hurriedly filled out a cheque, and passing it to him with a vengeful motion, dropped her veil, and, without speaking, left Richard Shrewder's office for her last time.

As she arrived in the street, she entered a carriage, and ordered the driver to go on until she commanded him to stop. The coachman, accustomed to such directions, and nothing, but mounting his box, drove rapidly away.

CHAPTER XXII.

For three hours Lady Beauford rode through London. During that time her mind had been busy upon the strange events of her life, and the position in which she was now placed—the position she had coveted, and for which she had deceived and plotted. Did she feel the quietude and content which she had anticipated? The eager, restless sensations that pervaded her being, and called up a desire for constant motion and excitement, the trepidation which she first experienced in the office, and which now began to grow upon her—allied with, and increased by an omnipresent horror, which conjured up mental pictures that struck terror to her breast; while her powerful volition struggled feebly against the extension of the above confiding and dangerous emotions, and aided by her admanitine heart and practical craft and shrewdness, sought with the strength of desperation to crush those demoralising, torturing, harrowing feelings, which upon nourishment would imperil her reason, render life doubly cursed, and launch her into more acute torment and deeper misery than all her previous fears of direful contingencies had ever engendered.

Having entirely recovered herself, she ordered the driver to proceed to the railway station. As she entered the station, the train was about to start for Marion, and she had only sufficient time in which to procure a first-class seat ere the bell rang loudly, the brakes were reversed, and with a rumbling, snorting, and hissing sound, the iron monster dashed onward over the metallic road.

After a pleasant ride of two hours, Lady Beauford arrived at Marion, and in a short time was in the castle.

"There, my love," she murmured, "here is the critique upon my book."

"Indeed, it cannot fail to speak well of it, my dear, for it is one of the most powerfully and finely-written works I ever read."

"Oh, you flatterer; but read the review."

"Alice, please to read it aloud," requested her father, passing her the paper.

As Lady Alice took the sheet, her mother recollected that the notice of the death of the colonel was also in it, but she could not now recall it, and with a hope that her daughter would not see it, she prepared to listen to the review.

Unfolding the sheet, Lady Alice cast her eye casually over the contents; she saw the review, when another paragraph aroused her curiosity, and she glanced at it. As she read the dreadful words which announced the death of her lover, her blood seemed to congeal in her veins, her life seemed slowly ebbing away, yet she retained her senses; her grief had been so poignant that not even death could make it

more so; it only seemed to shorten the distance between this life and another.

Gradually her face became as white as falling snow, and assumed an expression of rigid sorrow and despair, heart-rending to behold. She sat motionless, her hands clasped together, and her eyes raised, as if imploring her Creator to remove her to a brighter and better world.

"Alice, my love, are you not going to read?" queried her father.

"No!" was the only reply, in a voice forced from a heart overcharged with agony.

"Why do—?" he paused, saw her marble-like features, and continued with parental love and anxiety: "My child, are you ill—why so pale?"

Her lips moved, and the answer was carried to her father's ears in tones low, cold, almost sepulchral.

"Colonel Le Fontaine is dead!"

"What—dead—what does the child mean?" ejaculated Lord Beauford in perplexity.

"I have not the most remote idea," returned Lady Beauford, wonderingly. "What possesses you, Alice?"

She received no reply, but the deep blue eyes of the lovely girl rested upon her with a glance which almost caused her to quail beneath it.

Lady Beauford grasped the paper, and exclaimed, a moment afterwards, in tones of deep regret:

"Why, it's true. I am much grieved, for he was a good man; his only fault was presuming ambition."

"Sad—and indeed!" mused Lord Beauford, as he received the paper from his wife's hand, and perused the paragraph. "I am glad it has no more serious effect upon Alice."

"Alice, darling," murmured Lady Beauford, kneeling upon a hassock at her daughter's side, and taking her hand affectionately within her own—"do not look so silently sad; it is dreadful, I know. We cannot control our wilful hearts, but you must try and look upon it as a just dispensation of a beneficent Father."

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

THE artesian well of St. Louis, which has reached a depth of 3500ft., and is still going downward, is said to be two degrees colder than at the surface. How is this? Have the philosophers been wrong in the opinion that the temperature of the earth increases towards the centre?

NUMEROUS canals are to be constructed for the purpose of conveying a large quantity of water into the Seine, near Paris. The object is to deepen that river, and so convert Paris into a sea, or to speak correctly, a river port. A portion of the army is to be employed in the work.

THE eclipse of the sun last year being only partially visible to the astronomers, owing to the obscurity of the weather, it may be stated that a conjunction of Venus and the sun will take place in 1874, and again in 1882. It is hoped by these eclipses that the distance from the earth to the sun will be completely determined.

HERCULEANUM.—The exploration of Herculeanum, one of the cities buried in the great eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79, is to be resumed, thanks to a grant of money from King Victor Emmanuel. The researches into the tombs of this city have been interrupted for above twenty years, partly owing to the fact that it is buried much more deeply than Pompeii, and in a material much less easily excavated.

A NEW ALLOY TO IMITATE SILVER.—A new alloy, forming, we are told, a beautiful white metal, very hard, and capable of taking a brilliant polish, is obtained by melting together about seventy parts of copper, twenty of nickel, five-and-a-half of zinc, and four-and-a-half of cadmium. It is, therefore, a kind of German silver, in which part of the zinc is replaced by cadmium. This alloy has been recently made in Paris for the manufacture of spoons and forks, which resemble articles of silver.

SUN ENGINES.—Mr. Ericsson, a Swede, has long been known for his endeavours to improve the steam engine, and to construct an engine in which heated air should be the moving power. Within certain limits he has been successful, and many air engines from two to four horse-power are now at work. Since then, Mr. Ericsson has turned his attention to the grand question of utilising the sun's rays; and he states that he has devised apparatus by which the heat may be concentrated and used for steam and air engines. In other words the solar radiation accumulated on a space ten feet square and perpendicular to the sun's rays will develop somewhat more than one horse-power. Hence the sunshine that falls on the roofs of Manchester would keep going 5,000 steam engines of twenty horse-power each; and with this as a datum anyone may calculate the amount of

heat power which any given area of the earth's surface would represent while lit by the sun. And the calculation might be applied even to the sun, for, according to Mr. Ericsson, ten square feet of the sun's surface emit heat enough to run an engine of 45,984 horse-power. After this, it is clear that all those gloomy forebodings about the exhaustion of our coal may be entirely dismissed.

CURIOUS PRODUCTION OF COLD.—Dr. Phipson has recently discovered that an intense degree of cold is produced by dissolving sulphocyanate of ammonium in water. Many salts, more especially salts of ammonia, lower the temperature of water whilst dissolving; but, according to Dr. Phipson, no compound produces this effect in so marvellous a manner as sulphocyanate of ammonium. In one experiment thirty-five grammes of this salt, dissolved rapidly in thirty-five cubic centimetres of water at 23 deg. Cent., caused the thermometer to descend in a few seconds to 19 deg. Cent. The moisture of the atmosphere instantly condensed itself on the outside of the glass in thin plates of ice.

THE LARGEST ROPE IN THE WORLD.—A rope is now being manufactured at the Universe Works of Messrs. John and Edwin Wright, Birmingham and London, which completely eclipses all previous achievements, literally speaking, in the same "line." It is a round wire rope, 51 inches in circumference, 11,000 yards long, and weighing upwards of 60 tons. The rope consists of six strands, ten wires in each strand, each wire measuring 12,100 yards. The whole length of wire in the rope is 726,000 yards, or 412 miles; the six strands surrounding a hemp centre of 27 threads of rope-yarn, being made from Petersburg clean hemp, each thread measuring 15,000 yards, the whole length of rope-yarn being 405,000 yards, or a little over 230 miles. The wire is all tested, and is guaranteed by the contract not to stretch more than 6 per cent. without breakage.

A VENTURE has been brought out in the City recently to recover from the treasure-ships sunk at Vigo, in 1702, the bullion and articles of plate which went down with about a dozen of the vessels during the battle between the English and Dutch on the one side and the Spaniards and the French on the other. Extraordinary as it may seem, the position of nine of the ships has been discovered and marked with buoys. They seem to be lying imbedded in sand and mud which has gathered up around them, and Colonel Gowen, whose name is well known in connection with the raising of the Russian vessels at Sevastopol, alleges in his report that the position of the vessels offers fewer obstacles than he had then to encounter. The sum of 25,000*l.* is required to set the divers at work.

WELDING POWDER.—A powder of the following composition, recently patented in Belgium, is stated to be very useful for welding iron and steel together. It consists of one thousand parts of iron filings, five hundred parts of borax, fifty parts of balsam of copaiva or other resinous oil, with seventy-five parts of sal ammoniac. These ingredients are well mixed together, heated and pulverised. The process of welding is much the same as usual. The surfaces to be welded are powdered with the composition, and then brought to a cherry red heat, at which the powder melts, when the portions to be united are taken from the fire and joined. If the pieces to be welded are too large to be both introduced into the forge at the same time, one can first be heated with the welding powder to a cherry red heat, and the other afterwards to a white heat, after which the welding may be effected. Another composition for the same object consists of fifteen parts of borax, two parts of sal ammoniac, and two parts of cyanide of potassium. These constituents are dissolved in water, and the water itself afterwards evaporated at a low temperature.

MONASTERIES.—Monastic establishments originated in Egypt, and Antony of Thebais was their founder. Before his death many convents were established, and the ruins of fifty monasteries yet remain in that country which were planted by his disciples. Martin of Tours introduced them to the West. They soon became established in the most distant countries. The first convent in the Hebrides or Western Islands of Scotland was the convent of Sona, established by the Irish monks. The number of monasteries was multiplied very considerably; at first from mistaken notions of piety; then multitudes in the last convulsions of the Roman Empire took refuge within their walls from the rage of the barbarians; and in the middle ages they were rapidly multiplied by the devotion which induced individuals of the higher rank to abandon the associations of the world for the retirement and sanctity of the cloister. It is computed that at the revolution in France there were in that country alone two hundred thousand monks and nuns.



[THE DISGUISE.]

THE BLACK KNIGHT'S CHALLENGE.

BY THE

Author of "Florian," "Cordelia's Fortune," &c., &c.

CHAPTER VII.

It was past noon when Prince Hugh reached the camp of the crusaders, and upon his appearance his immediate followers, to the number of five or six thousand, sent up a shout of joy that shook the air as with a thunder-bolt.

"Prince Hugh is safe!" were the cries that rent the air.

And very soon he was surrounded by his friends, all eager to know where he had been, and if he were really safe and well. Bowing and waving his hand, and returning the friendly salutations as far as he was able, the prince slowly made his way towards his tent. But the anxiety of his people was so great to know where he had been, that they crowded together in his path, and he was beginning to be perplexed and irritated, when his faithful esquire gained his side.

"My lord," said De St. Valery, "if you can tell them where you have been, and why you have been absent so long, without injury to your own reputation, do so."

The prince regarded his esquire with a look of blank amazement.

"Speak!" urged Walter. "Speak—and I will explain hereafter."

Upon that Hugh drew up his horse, and turned towards those of his followers who had blocked up his way.

"Men of Vermandois," he said, "when I left the camp I only intended to have been absent a few hours. On the mountain, in a secluded place, I met fourteen Seljouide Turks of the sultan's army, and gave them battle. I had slain or wounded all but two, and these I had driven up against the face of a high precipice, when two of the wounded ones, who had made their way unobserved to the top of the cliff, hurled down upon me a heavy rock. They discharged two. The first crushed one of their own men who stood before me; and the second, just as I had slain the only remaining Moslem, struck me upon the head, felling me to the earth, as one dead. I was found by a party of mountaineers, who carried me to their cavern home and cared for me; and from the moment when the rock struck me I had no return of sense until this morning—no sober, rational sense, that enabled me to know where I was. That is all, my men, I am weak

and fatigued now. Give me rest, I pray you, and at another time you shall have the whole story of my adventure."

The Vermandois were satisfied, and with louder cries of joy than before, they cleared the way to their chieftain's tent, and allowed him to proceed without farther impediment; and ere long he was alone with his esquire, having laid aside his armour, and donned a silken robe.

"Walter," demanded the knight, as soon as he was sure that no other ears were near, "how long have I been absent from the camp?"

"This is the seventh day, my lord."

"Are you sure?"

"You went away on the second day of last week, and this is the first day of another week."

"Oh, my soul, then it was not a dream!"

Walter De St. Valery regarded his master with a puzzled, anxious look; and it was very plain to be seen that he had a heavy burden upon his mind.

"Walter," said Hugh, after a short silence, "you spoke to me but now as though there was trouble brewing against me here in the camp. Did you mean so?"

"I did, my lord."

"Tush! Speak out, good Walter, and speak plainly. He is a true friend who tells the truth unsparingly when it can be of service. Now tell me what is plotting against me."

"My lord, you know that the Bourbon brothers, Peter and Arnold, are your enemies; and with them, against you, works Raymond's favourite captain, Guiscard de Grillon."

A bitter smile passed over the knight's face as he replied:

"All three of these false-hearted knights aspired, in turn, to the hand of the Lady Gertrude; and all three, in turn, were overcome by her in the list. We can easily understand why they should hate me. Aye!" the prince cried, smiting his clenched fist upon his knee, "and why they should fear me too! Walter, as true as heaven, those dastards contrived the abduction of Gertrude of Thoulouse!"

"My lord!"

"It is even so; in my own heart, I know it, and in time the whole army shall know it. But I have not the proof that would satisfy a court of judges. They caused that she should be taken away from the fisherman's hut, and carried to one of the cities we were likely to attack; and there they planned, either that she should be sold into slavery, out of revenge, or else she is to be held until they shall decide by lot which shall possess her. Good Walter, I saw Gertrude of Thoulouse upon the walls of Nice! I am

not mistaken. And I think my enemies know that I saw her; for Guiscard de Grillon was very near to me at the time. I saw her, and I determined to find a messenger whom I could safely send unto her; and for that purpose I sought the Old Man of the Mountain, knowing, if I could secure his friendship, I should obtain the messenger. It was for that purpose I went to the mountains a week ago."

"And did you find the renowned chief?" asked the esquire, with much interest.

"Yes, I met him; and it was on his behalf that I engaged the Turks."

And thereupon Hugh gave to his companion a detailed account of his battle, from the time when he first came in sight of the unequal conflict to the falling of the rock upon his head.

"And where were you when you recovered your senses?" asked Walter.

The knight bent his head upon his hand and reflected. He had begun to think that the vision of the pavilion and the garden might have been substantial realities, after all; and, if so, he had bound himself never to speak of them.

"Good Walter," he finally answered, looking up, "I hardly know how to answer you. If the vision were real, then I came to my senses first yesterday, when I found myself in an abode far more comfortable than I had ever expected to behold in such a locality, and the Old Man of the Mountain was with me. He had caused me to be borne thither, and there I had been nursed for six days by slaves who had stood over me all the time. Gentle opiates had been administered to prevent the return of sense and the consequent realisation of pain, and in that condition a cure almost miraculous had been effected. I told to Hashishin my story, and he promised to assist me. Aye, he promised to send to me the four servants whose lives I saved with his own—and he did it cheerfully, pledging an undying friendship besides. But, mind you, this may all have been a dream. At the close of our interview I drank a small measure of nectar, and shortly afterwards I fell asleep upon my bed. So much for what may have happened in the grotto, if it were not a dream. This morning I awoke, and found myself lying just where I fell beneath the huge rock which the Turk hurled upon me. I was in full armour, my arms by my side, and my horse feeding close by. There I was, all alone, and no signs of either living or dead men near me."

And then the knight told of his meditations. And of his final resolution to return to the camp, remarking, in conclusion, "We shall ere long know if I dreamed or not. If I saw the Old Man, as I think, his guards will come."

"Of one thing, at least, you may be sure," suggested the esquire: "you could not have remained upon that rocky table on the mountain side during the six days, for I know that I crossed it with a hundred men several times."

"That is evident enough. I think the messengers will come; and in the meantime, Walter, I would know what mine enemies have done. You were about to tell me when we branched off to the story of my adventure. Tell me all. My ears are prepared, and the consciousness of right and honour gives me strength to bear everything that the craven traitors can bring upon me."

"My lord," said De St. Valery, speaking slowly, with a solemn sobriety, and with the air of a man who would mingle counsel with his revelations, "you must not despise the efforts of your enemies against you; for, believe me, they are at work with caution, feeling their way carefully as they advance, and seeking seeming evidence to sustain their charges. First, they are planning to show that you took the oath of allegiance to the Greek Emperor, and that even now you are working in his interest. It has been whispered that, should Nice finally fall, it will not fall into the hands of those noble soldiers of the Cross who will have shed their blood for the prize."

"And do they insinuate that Hugh of Vermandois knows aught of this? that he will seek to bring about such a result?"

"Yes, my lord; they not only insinuate this, but they are leading many of the crusaders to believe it. The men of Vermandois denounce the thing as a vile slander; and so do the followers of the stout duke, Robert of Normandy, together with the noble Count of Flanders and his men. But you must remember how many chiefs there are who know you not, only as they hear of you from others. It is known that you spent the winter at the emperor's court, and that he bestowed upon you more favours than were bestowed upon any other knight of Europe."

"Walter!" cried the prince, while an icy hand seemed for the moment laid upon his heart, "do you believe these things?"

"I!" uttered the esquire, as though the very Monarch of Tartarus had at that instant claimed him for his own.

"Do you believe them, Walter? Mark me," the knight added, with an emotion that set his lips as though they had been made of steel, "the man claiming to be a friend, if he hesitates and doubts within the honour of his brother has been assailed, is worse than an open and loud-mouthed believer; for of the shapeless material afforded by the shy and embarrassed hesitation of an aforesaid confidant and companion, the scheming enemy may build up just such evidence of crime as suits him best."

"In heaven's name!" cried the astounded man, sinking upon his knees, and grasping his master's hands, "what mean those words?"

"Your looks, Walter. You tremble, and your gaze seems to quail before me."

A moment the esquire remained as he was, and then, while a gleam of light fell upon his face, he arose to his feet.

"My lord," he said, in a tone of relief, "I understand it. I had turned my thoughts upon the misfortunes which had conspired to throw power into the hands of your enemies—misfortunes which commenced with the fatal wreck at Epirus, and which have been multiplied since; and thus thinking, I shuddered with the reflection that upon the shoulders of the very noblest of all the true and gallant knights whom heaven had given to the work of redeeming the Holy Land the sins of the most base and vile might be laid. It was that idea, fully pictured in my mind, that gave tone and expression to my face when you looked up."

Hugh caught the hand of his friend, and raised it to his lips; and, in the warmth of his impulsive nature, he cried out:

"In heaven's name, dear Walter, forgive me! Oh! it would break my heart if I thought you could prove false! But I ought to do penance for ever having conceived such a thing possible. You will forgive me, Walter?"

The faithful esquire, flinging his arms around the prince's neck, said: "If I can know that you love me, and trust me, and still retain me in your prayers, I shall be as happy as I can ask to be. This poor life is yours!"

The Prince gazed up through a flood of tears; and while his lips were trembling in vain effort at speech, Walter added, with solemn earnestness:

"Aye, my lord, and more than that; I can give you assurance that ten thousand men surround you at this moment whose hearts no power of earth can alienate from you!"

"Ah, whom have we here? Roland, what now?"

"Four strangers, my lord," answered the page,

"who demand to speak with Prince Hugh of Vermandois."

"What manner of men are they?"

"By their garbs, my lord, I should pronounce them fishermen of the lake."

Who could they be? Would the Ismaelians come in such garb? But the prince ordered that they should be admitted to his presence.

Ah, it was not a dream! No, no—for before him, in humble, submissive mood, knelt the promised *Fédais* of the Old Man of the Mountain.

CHAPTER VIII.

WALTER DE ST. VALERY would have left the tent when the messengers of Hashishin entered, but his master detained him.

"No, good Walter, I will not have it so," said Hugh. "Thou art faithful, and I will henceforth, while this matter is in hand, trust thee as though thou wert a part of myself. Only I claim from thee this promise: Say unto me that no sign, word, or deed, which may meet thy senses in connection with this business shall pass thy lips but with my consent. Thy promise will be to me as good as an oath."

The esquire promised readily, and showed by his manner, as well as by his words, that he was greatly pleased with this mark of his master's confidence.

After this the prince made a sign to the Ismaelians that they should arise, and commanded that they should tell him for what purpose they had come; whereupon one of the four again knelt, and thus spoke:

"To the noble Prince Hugh, a Christian knight, our beloved lord hath sent us, with the command that our lives be given into his hands. We are here to hear and obey. Except the raising of our hands against our own brethren, there can be nothing which we will not undertake at thy bidding."

The prince comprehended at once that he had only to make known his desire in order to set these devoted men at work. He reflected awhile, and then asked his esquire what was the hour. As for himself, he had kept no reckoning of time. He was informed that it was near the tenth hour. Hugh had no idea that the day was so well-nigh spent; but there might be yet time for work—perhaps the most favourable time was yet to come.

"Friends," he said, directing his address, however, to the man who had thus far acted as spokesman of the party, "do you think you can gain an entrance into this besieged city?"

"Very easily," answered the man. "And in order that thy mind may be made easy upon that score, I will show thee how. Among the Turks whom you slew upon the mountain was a certain officer of the Sultan's army, named Abdul Ben Achmed. He was of my own age, my own stature, and he had many shades of resemblance in feature and look. I, Hassan, have secured Ben Achmed's entire garb, together with his arms; and in his guise I shall enter the city. My companions have also garbs which were taken from the bodies of other fallen Turks."

Hassan observed that a query had suggested itself to the Christian's mind, and quickly divining its import, he added:

"The bodies of the four Turks, whose garbs and arms we thus appropriated, were carried away and buried by ourselves, so that we may not fear detection from the knowledge of their death. And, moreover, my lord, this Abdul Ben Achmed was often a messenger from Kilidge Arslan to the forces within the city; for you must know that even now the Sultan's wife and children are within the walls of Nice."

"Have you brought these disguises with you?"

"Yes, my lord."

"And you can enter Nice this night?"

"We can enter Nice at any time, my lord, and in any manner that suits us best. These disguises will only serve to enable us to pass certain guards without question. We have more power than you think."

"Then listen. Hassan, when I left my native land I held in charge the most lovely damsel that my eyes ever rested upon. She was my promised bride. It had been planned that we should be married in Jerusalem. On the coast of Epirus our ship was wrecked, and during the following night my lady was stolen away. I had enemies among my own countrymen who must have contrived the wickedness; but they must have been Moslems who bore her away. I will not tell you how we have searched, nor how we have suffered. I will only say that one week ago, when I stood upon the top of the outer wall of your city, I beheld my beloved in the hands of four stout Saracens, being dragged away from the inner battlements. That lady is Gertrude of Thoulouse, daughter of the noble Count Raymond. I must see her. Bring her to me if you can."

Hassan shook his head.

"Do you doubt?"

The *Fédais* stopped the knight with a motion of his hand.

"I doubt no word of yours, my lord. We will find the lady, if she be in the city; but the bringing of her forth may not be so easy. Such prisoners are not trusted under the sole security of bolts and bars. Eyes that never sleep are watching her. It is not impossible that some of our own soldiers may be guarding her. There are many of them employed by private nobles in Nice."

"But," cried Hugh, "you will see her, and bring me word?"

"We will do that."

And upon that mission the *Fédais* soon afterwards went their way, Hassan having promised that he would return as early on the morrow as possible.

After the messengers had gone, Hugh de Vermandois walked forth in his own quarter, and met a large number of his knights and trusty esquires, to whom, being earnestly pressed, he related all that had transpired during his absence, only omitting the name of Hashishin and the circumstances of the garden. He represented the truth as nearly as he could without connecting himself in any manner with the Old Man of the Mountain, feeling himself perfectly justified in withholding information which concerned no one but himself.

There had been no assault made upon the city during his absence, nor had the Turks upon the mountains showed any disposition to make an attack.

The prince could not but discover that his friends were uneasy concerning him; but at the same time he received new proofs of their friendship and fidelity; and he thought that in a few days he should be able to disperse the insignificant cloud which had arisen upon the horizon of his fate. It could not be long, he thought, before he should expose the perfidy of the false knights who were now so busily engaged in traducing him. But he must gain Gertrude's evidence against them, an event which would at once clear his fame, and secure his lasting happiness.

At an early hour the prince retired to his couch, where he slept soundly until morning; when he had arisen and performed his ablutions, he felt stronger than on the previous day. In fact, when he had eaten his breakfast, he believed himself as capable of bearing a lance as ever. He had arisen from the morning meal, and was upon the point of giving some direction to his esquire, when Hassan, the *Fédai*, stood before him, having glided in like a spectre, unannounced, and unnoticed by those in the outer tent.

"Ha! Hassan! Is't thou?"

"Come to bring thee this," responded the messenger, at the same time handing to the prince a tiny parcel, which might have been effectually hidden between the thumb and finger.

Hugh took it, and found it to be a bit of fine white silk, which he quickly opened and spread out, discovering a surface about the size of his palm, neatly glazed with some glutinous substance, and written upon with a pen. And this was what was written, and he read it with a wildly-throbbing heart. How quickly he recognised those characters—bold, yet delicate, and blurred in one or two places, as though drops of moisture had fallen there.

"TO THE NOBLE AND VALIANT HUGH OF VERMANDOIS: I am a prisoner in the hands of the Emir Abu Hassa. Thus far I have found strength for the protection of my honour. Come to me, if you can. No stratagem can free me from these bonds; and yet the way for my deliverance is open. He who bears this says he can bring you into the city. If you can come with safety to yourself, do so, in answer to the earnest prayer of GERTRUDE."

The prince pressed the missive to his lips, and then turned towards the messenger.

"You saw the lady?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Is she not beautiful?"

"Beautiful and majestic," replied Hassan.

"Did she tell you of her situation? of the treatment she received at the hands of those who guard her?"

"Only that she is closely watched every moment of the time."

"And this Abu Hassa, the Emir—do you know him?"

"Yes, my lord, I know him very well."

"What is he like? Tell me, Hassan, what you know of him."

"He is one of the most powerful of the Seljoucid emirs, my lord, and is in the immediate service of the Sultan, Kilidge Arslan. He has lived fifty years, and I doubt if any man ever did more iniquity in the same length of time. He is a noted warrior, and at this moment holds command in that quarter of the city where the Sultan's family is housed."

"And you think I can gain entrance to the city?"

"Yes."

"When?"
 "This night."
 "In your company?"
 "Yes."
 "And you can lead me to Gortrude?"
 "I can lead you to the palace of the emir, and for success beyond that we must trust to the fate which is written. I think it is decreed that you shall see her."

The prince had many more questions to ask—questions concerning the woman he loved; for, after the long and dreary separation, it seemed almost like being restored to her, thus to converse with one who had just left her. During the conversation, Hugh learned that Hassan's three companions had remained in the city; and, furthermore, that for himself there was a disguise in waiting which would serve him well against discovery. It was a long time to wait—the whole day—but it passed at length, and when the shades of evening had settled upon the Christian camp, Hugh de Vermandois went forth from his tent in company with the trusty guide, having instructed his esquire to answer anyone who should inquire for him that he was away on business of his own.

It will be understood that Hugh de Vermandois was in no way under the command of any human being in that army. He was one of the five French chiefs who had set forth, each in command of his own army, and upon his own responsibility. Yet he owed a certain allegiance to his fellow-chieftains, in that they had mutually bound themselves by a solemn oath; and that oath declared that not one of them would turn his back towards Jerusalem, either through faintness of heart, or for any selfish purpose, until the Holy Sepulchre had been reached. Hugh realised and appreciated the full force of this solemn obligation; and he would have been one of the very first to denounce and bring to trial the chief who should have broken his faith. But in the present business he was at work towards an end as important to him as was the rescue of the Holy City; and he knew that in no way was he stepping aside from his duty to his fellow-crusaders. On the contrary, he was engaged in a purpose which demanded all his energies, and to the accomplishment of which his knightly oath had been pledged before he ever dreamed of Jerusalem.

"Good Walter," he had said to his esquire, "the very first oath I took upon receiving my knightly spurs was this: I will never see an innocent woman in imminent peril without hastening to her assistance with all possible despatch, and devoting my life to her rescue, if necessary."

So the prince had no hesitation in pursuing the work before him without letting others into his secret.

It was well into the evening when Hugh followed Hassan from the tent, and with quick steps they glided along upon the outskirts of the camp, keeping out of the way of the light of the watch-fires. They had come very near to the shore of the lake, when Hassan whispered to the prince that someone was following them. The latter looked back, and by the dim starlight he could distinguish two or three moving objects not far away.

"Have you enemies who could have any interest in following you?" asked the guide.

Hugh, impelled by the instinct of his own consciousness of honour and right, was upon the point of answering in the negative, when he remembered the circumstance of his being followed in the forest, and the revelation which St. Valery had subsequently made, and this led him to change his words.

"Yes," he replied, with considerable reluctance. "I have enemies in the camp who would like to pry into my affairs, and their motives are bad."

"Then keep your eyes upon me, and follow closely," said Hassan.

And with this the guide walked on a few paces very quickly, and suddenly disappeared from sight within a clump of bushes; but Hugh easily found the opening, and having submitted to a slight inconvenience from making his way through the tangled mass, where there was only a jackal-path, he discovered Hassan just turning the outer angle of an old wall, which seemed to be a part of the ruins of some ancient building; and when he had gained this point he found himself in the midst of a mass of tumble-down rocks and jagged walls, with corridors and shattered arches, which he had never before visited, and of the existence of which, so near to the camp, he had had no previous knowledge. By and by they came to a small open space, which might have been the inner court of a common dwelling; and here Hugh expected to see his guide step off through an open arch, beyond which the waters of the lake were visible; but the course pursued by the *Fédai* was somewhat different. Turning a little to the left, towards a stout wall, he seized what appeared to be a fragment of rock, accidentally fallen upon a pro-

jecting ledge of the wall, and with a smart pull he drew open a secret door, and bade the knight enter. Such was Hugh's confidence in his conductor that, if he had pulled up a trap, and bade him leap into a dark abyss, he would hardly have hesitated. So through the open doorway he passed, without questioning, and when Hassan had reclosed the door they were in impenetrable darkness.

"Your hand, my lord,"
 The prince gave it, and presently they arrived at a place where a blazing torch was stuck into a crevice of the rock; and as soon as Hugh could command his eyes, he saw two of Hassan's companions standing near.

"Ha!" cried Hugh, the truth flashing upon him the moment he saw the two *Fédais* there in waiting. "Is there a subterranean passage into the city?"

For a few seconds Hassan was silent; then he turned and spoke in a strange tongue with his companions, one of whom directly produced a bundle, from which Hassan took the various articles of clothing of a Soljoudie doctor, and handing them to the knight, he bade him remove his own outer garments and don these in their place. But the prince preferred to retain his hauberk, as he found the doctor's tunic ample enough to cover it. This hauberk was of pliant leather, reaching from his throat to his hips, with close-fitting sleeves extending to the wrists, and so cunningly covered with a mail of interwoven rings of steel that no sword had ever yet been found trenchant enough to cut it; and it must have been a strong arm, with a clean sweep and true aim, that could have even driven the point of a dagger through it.

While our hero had been changing his garb the two companions had again conferred together, and when he was ready to set forth, Hassan said unto him:

"My lord, you have guessed the truth. There is a secret underground passage from these ruins into the city, known only to our master and his guards. You are to be conducted by that passage, and it was Hashishin's command, if we had occasion to lead you that way, that you should be hoodwinked. Have you any objection to allowing yourself to be thus deprived of your sight while threading the secret passage?"

"Supposing I had objections?" suggested the prince.

"In that case," replied Hassan, "I should confer with my brothers, and decide whether we would accept a solemn oath as sufficient security."

"My friends," said the Christian, frankly, "I have no reason to believe that you could wish to deceive or betray me; so I will trust myself in your hands hoodwinked. Thus you will serve your master, and at the same time serve me as well."

Hassan's expression of gratitude was simple and heart-felt, and when he had bound a silken scarf securely over the prince's eyes, he took him by the hand, saying:

"Come with me, and fear no danger; for you are in the hands of a friend in whose fidelity you may with perfect safety confide."

(To be continued.)

ADELICIA.

BY THE

Author of "The Beauty of Paris," "Wild Redburn," &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE second night, unlike the first, was calm and clear, and a bright June moon made the ride of Lord Charles and Adelcia much more pleasant and safe. They rode all night until dawn, when they halted at a farmhouse, where they separated, and rested until the sun was quite high in the east.

Then Lord Charles, still wearing his mask of platonic friendship, again rejoined her, with the information that he had with great difficulty secured fresh horses for the continuance of their journey.

He found it very difficult to wear this mask in her presence, for his heart was tumultuous with passionate love for her, longing to be spoken. The few times he had seen her marvellous beauty had been more than sufficient to fire his soul almost to madness, especially as his thoughts had been dwelling rapturously upon the beauty of her portrait for weeks, and as he had found the original so immeasurably superior to the painting of the artist's pencil, and the dreamy delineations of his own impassioned imagination.

"She shall be mine," he secretly vowed, as he carefully averted his face from hers as they rode together. "She shall be mine, if I die for it. She shall be mine for ever, for I feel that I shall love her as deeply, as burningly for ever as I love her now. I

must throw off this mask of cold politeness soon, and I would now, did I not fear to alarm her before she is wholly at my mercy."

It was near noon when, as the road they followed led them into the park of some wealthy personage, Lord Charles said more warmly than he had hitherto spoken:

"We may ride slowly now, lady, for we are near our journey's end. We are now upon the estates of my father, the Duke of Trenthamdale."

"Your lordship's father! And is the Duke of Trenthamdale your father?" exclaimed Adelcia.

"Did Sir Bertram never tell you that his friend Lord Charles was the son of a duke?"

"The son of a duke!" thought Adelcia, startled by the phrase. "It is to the son of a duke that my father, the earl, betrothed me. Thank heaven, this 'son of a duke' cannot be the man—so cold, so haughty, so different from Sir Bertram. I would not exchange Sir Bertram for all the dukes and sons of dukes in the world."

"No, my lord," she replied, aloud. "Sir Bertram styled you simply his dear friend, Lord Charles Gray. But if those are the estates of your lordship's father, I fear the duke may think lightly of me, coming as I do a fugitive, and with no companion of my own sex."

"I will explain, Mistress Adelcia," interrupted Lord Charles, quickly. "Great secrecy of movement was insisted upon by Master Stepmore, and is here set down emphatically in this card of instructions which I received from him. I do not think it prudent to permit my father to know of your presence in this neighbourhood—at least I am led to think so from what Master Stepmore said. Therefore I have selected this lonely and winding way to lead you to the cottage of a worthy old woman, not fair to look upon, but a good and faithful soul, who will befriend you."

"Oh, do not think, my lord, that I do not implicitly confide in you," exclaimed Adelcia, who feared that she had offended him. "I leave all to you, as I must, for here I have no friend or adviser except you," and, in her earnestness, she cast aside her veil.

"Thank you, lady," he replied, forcing himself to appear somewhat cold, for the time had not yet come when he intended to throw off his treacherous mask. "I hope Sir Bertram may soon arrive, and that you and he may be made for ever happy. From what you have been pleased to tell me as we rode together since we left Stepmore Retreat, I have learned that you have great cause to fear the pursuit of Sir Otto Dare—why, I have not asked, as it does not concern me to know more than that he is the enemy of the maiden whom my dear friend loves. And to serve Sir Bertram, I am ready to dare everything. Let us ride on, and let me ask you to fear nothing, for although the forest is dense and dark, it is secure, and a safe retreat."

"I hope Dr. Carew has deceived those whom I fear," said Adelcia, as she followed Lord Charles, the road being too narrow to permit them to ride abreast.

"I am sure that he has, or he would have overtaken us," replied Lord Charles.

Adelcia was startled, and her horse also, by the sudden appearance of a wild, fierce and haggard face, which was thrust out very near from a bush of dense foliage.

Lord Charles, being a few feet in advance of his companion, had passed the bush the instant before the face was thrust into view, so near that of the affrighted maiden that she could have easily struck it with her riding switch.

Two lean and bony hands parted the foliage to give room for the face, and the hands and face were all that could be seen by Adelcia, as she exclaimed: "Heaven guard me!" and she sat trembling in her saddle, while, unable to fly, she gazed at the fierce gray eyes glaring at her.

"Another bird! another bird!" croaked, or rather screamed, a cracked female voice from the skinny lips and toothless mouth of the ambushed visage; and, as Lord Charles halted and wheeled his horse, the long, lean hands thrust aside the foliage and revealed the deformed figure of a very short and very broad old woman, squatted like a huge toad amid the bushes.

There was no loss of resemblance to a huge toad in her form and face, than there was in the posture of this hideous old woman; for her arms and legs were exceedingly short, while her hands and feet were enormously long and large, as if to make amends for the shortness of the crooked limbs to which they were attached. Her head was large and rugged in shape, her forehead wide and flat. Her eyes were of extraordinary size, very prominent, and with heavy livid lids, but half-opened, as if to shade the fierce gray and yellowish eyes beneath them.

"Another bird! Another bird, and the handsomest of all we have caught!" croaked this old woman, as

she snatched her heavy eyelids at the trembling maiden.

"Peace, Dame Margaret!" said Lord Charles, laughingly, as he recognised the woman. "Come from the bush and read what Dr. Carew has sent to you."

"Pardon, my dear lord," said the woman, rising and clambering down the sides of the ravine with marvellous agility for one of her years and shape; and, as she did so, Adelia saw that cruel nature had placed a great hunch upon her back, and that she was scarcely four feet in height.

"I was asleep, my lord," continued the old woman, "and when I opened my eyes I did not see you, but the lady."

Adelia was amazed at the change of expression which now marked the extraordinary face of the speaker. Ugly, repulsively ugly, she continued to be, but all evil expression of eye and lip fled the instant she recognised the presence of Lord Charles.

Care, infirmity, want, poverty, were engraved in fearful distinctness upon her deformed and distorted countenance; but malice, vice, and wickedness had vanished from lip and eye. And yet Adelia was sure she had seen great villainy of heart and a plain record of an evil life upon Dame Margaret's face a moment before; and cruel fierceness coupled with stealthy cunning too.

Dame Margaret read the few words written by Dr. Carew, and then made a very lowly courtesy to Adelia, saying:

"Dr. Jerome Carew can always depend upon me, young lady, for I am greatly his debtor. And so may Lord Charles, for he has always been kind to me. Would you read what Dr. Carew wrote?" she added, extending the slip of paper towards Adelia.

She was tired and faint from over-fatigue, and said, quickly:

"Heaven will bless you as you aid me, my good woman, and I hope I may, ere long, be able to reward you."

"I ask no reward, my beautiful young lady," began Margaret; but Lord Charles called her aside and conversed with her in a low tone for several minutes, during which time the dwarf listened very attentively, keeping her eyes fixed upon the ground the while; and as this private speech terminated, she returned to Adelia, saying, in a tone meant to be very kind and compassionate:

"My dear young lady, I am very sorry to hear that you are so persecuted by Sir Otto Dare. He is, indeed, a very bad and dangerous man. But you will be safe with me, and receive every comfort, Mistress Beatrice Allen—I think that is the name you said, my lord."

"Yes, that is the young lady's name," replied Lord Charles. "This is Dame Margaret Pallster," he added, and waving his hand towards the old woman, as he addressed Adelia, "and you may place full confidence in her, lady. I may as well leave you now to the care of Dame Margaret, who will conduct you to her cottage."

"The young lady may ride up to the cottage fearing nothing, and your lordship may send anyone you please there for the horse; or better still, I will myself lead the animal over to the castle stables. I do not care to have anyone from there prowling and spying about my cottage. Not that a poor, lone old woman has aught to conceal, but as Sir Otto Dare is a very dangerous man, it is best to take every precaution."

"Very well," replied Lord Charles, who knew that her purpose was to see him at the castle, to receive full and particular instructions as to what he desired she should do. "So adieu, lady, for I may not see you for several days, and I hope I may come with Sir Bertram. Be assured that I shall be watchful over your safety, and, should it be necessary, that I will protect you with my life."

Adelia's beautiful face had remained unveiled since they had met Margaret, and Lord Charles had had more opportunity to gaze upon the remarkable loveliness of her enchanting features than had been his fortune during all their long and rapid journey from Stepmore Retreat.

It was with great difficulty that he refrained from warm and even passionate expressions of admiration as he was about to leave her. But his eyes declared that his heart was deeply smitten, and Adelia blushed as she recognised the fire of ardent admiration, if not of love, in his gaze, as he said:

"I will protect you with my life."

Emboldened by her blushes, he added:

"It is best that we should part, dear lady, or in my desire to win your esteem I may forget my duty to my friend, Sir Bertram."

With these words, which were in fact a subtle declaration of his love for her, Lord Charles spurred away, and was out of sight in a moment.

Adelia felt her cheeks and brow burn as the meaning of his speech sank into her mind.

"He loves me," she thought. "How I have wronged him! I thought he was cold and haughty, while in truth he has been forcing himself to play a part. Or can it be that he only desired to pay me a pretty compliment as he parted from me? No, there was love in his eyes as he spoke. But he saw none for him in mine. Perhaps it is best that I had not time to thank him for his kindness, as he might have construed my gratitude as encouragement."

The voice of the old woman broke in upon her thoughts at this moment.

"Come, my gentle lady," said Margaret, "we may move on; please follow me, and we shall soon be under my humble roof."

The old woman walked with a nimbleness which surprised Adelia, who had expected that her progress through the tangled wood-path would be slow, and the young lady wondered how one so old and so deformed could walk, or rather hop along, so fast.

"I little expected to be confided to the care of one like this when I left Stepmore Retreat," thought Adelia, as she lowered her veil, and permitted her horse to follow the old woman. "But heaven is over me wherever I may be."

With this pious reflection, the persecuted and imperilled maiden resigned herself to the guardianship of one who seemed more like a witch of the woods than a human protector.

CHAPTER XXII.

We must now return to Stepmore Retreat, that we may learn how events progressed while Adelia fled under the treacherous protection of Lord Charles.

After the hoofs of the departing horses no longer sounded upon his ear, Sir Bertram returned to the house as secretly as he had left it, and accompanied by the outlawed earl.

The hearts of both were heavy, though from very different causes. Sir Bertram was sad and depressed with thoughts of his sudden, perhaps long, perhaps final, separation from his betrothed. Of the honour and rectitude of Lord Charles he had not the slightest suspicion.

The outlawed earl, however, whose experience of the treachery of men of every degree was great, was by no means satisfied with what he had read, or imagined he had read in the character and upon the features of the young lord. He had no fear that Lord Charles would be so faithless to Sir Bertram as to betray Adelia to Sir Otto Dare, were the latter to learn that she had been placed under the young lord's protection; but he felt that, should Lord Charles be of a susceptible and courtlike character, the extraordinary beauty of a maiden whom he believed to be of a rank and class far inferior to his own, would expose her to the assaults of the light and unscrupulous gallantry of the times.

The earl was vexed that it had so chanced that his daughter was confided to the care of the very man to whom he had so rashly betrothed her, and of whom he knew so little. The loss of the important casket, however, had compelled him to trust to the supposed friendship of Lord Charles for Sir Bertram. But that which he feared most of all was, that circumstances might arise which should cause Lord Charles to seek refuge and concealment for Adelia at or near the residence of Duke Lewis, in which event it was probable that the duke might see her, and on inquiry or information from Lord Charles, discover that she was the adopted daughter of Richard Stepmore.

There was cause to fear, that although the duke had not, he imagined, discovered that Adelia Louvaine was the name of the maiden whom Edgar Sheldon, Earl of Hereford, had betrothed to Lord Charles Grey, her remarkable resemblance to her deceased mother, whom Duke Lewis had once known well, would arouse his suspicions and lead him to suspect the truth. Were Duke Lewis to discover the truth, the earl knew that he would at once use all his power to wed her to Lord Charles, and then disregard the agreement he had made with the Earl of Hereford.

There was no danger of these results should Lord Charles keep a straight and rapid course for Scotland, and the chances that he would do otherwise were too remote to take the place of the great cause of the earl's present heaviness of heart, which was the loss of the casket, and the fact that the all-important secret had become known to those who would use it against Adelia.

Master Stepmore met the earl and Sir Bertram as they entered the house, and bade them follow him to his own apartment, where he said:

"Your return tells me that Adelia has departed, and I am glad that it is so, for my mind has been racked with fear lest Sir Otto might make his appearance before she was well on her way. He will certainly be here to-morrow. We cannot decide what to do until we know his purpose, and with what authority he comes. We have every reason to

believe that he has the contents of the casket, and we hope that he has them with him, and that he has not made known to anyone what those contents reveal."

The consultation and discussion of the three lasted for more than an hour, as they could only surmise what steps might be taken by Sir Otto Dare. Plans of actions suited to every imagined emergency were considered one after another, but that which was finally adopted and executed will be revealed as our story proceeds towards its conclusion.

The rising sun of the next day shone upon Sir Otto Dare and his troop, still separated by the swollen river. The former, after having successfully crossed the broken ford, did not ride towards Stepmore Retreat, as it was not his purpose to appear there alone. He knew that in his absence from his troop his banner-bearer, Omrah, would take command and hold his followers together until they could rejoin him, or he rejoin them.

As the locality of the side of the river upon which he was was far more familiar to him than that of the other, after several minutes of reflection, he resolved to seek shelter and repose for the night at a farmhouse where he had tarried some months before, while he was spying about Stepmore Retreat.

"I may find someone there," he thought, "who, for a piece of gold, will lead my followers across the ford in the morning."

Two hours' ride carried him to the farmhouse, where his unexpected arrival caused no little excitement among the simple-minded rustics. He did not tell them his name and title, but his air and garb told them that he who had once tarried with them as a pretended French merchant was in truth some great and powerful noble, and all eagerly ministered to his needs.

He stated that he had become separated from his followers in crossing the Stepmore ford, and asked if any of those who lived at the farmhouse would engage to conduct his troop across the river in the morning.

There were two or three who replied that if the storm which was threatening came on before morning it would be impossible for anyone to cross the ford, as the river was already much swollen, and a heavy fall of rain would increase the depth of the river greatly.

"But," said one, "if so be the storm pass away without rain, as I think it will, I will try to serve your honour, provided Master Stepmore give me permission."

"Master Stepmore! And what has he to do with you?" demanded Sir Otto.

"Master Stepmore, your greatness, is owner of the land on both sides of the river thereabout," replied the rustic. "It be not of the people's highway, but private property, and unless some officer of the queen demand the right of way, I would not dare to conduct your honour's troop without the consent of Master Stepmore."

"Oh, so you all fear the merchant here!" exclaimed Sir Otto, sneeringly. "I suppose he has lent you money, and has a creditor's iron grip about your necks!"

"He has lent us money, sir, and always aided all who need aid. We do not fear him. We all love him. We are not his tenants, but he is as kind to us as if we were. No! no! No gold could tempt us to do anything that might displease Master Stepmore. His son, too—they say he is Sir Bertram Stepmore now—is as kind and as much beloved as his father. Then there is Mistress Adelia too—Master Stepmore's adopted daughter—she is an angel. It might not please our benefactors to cross a troop of rude soldiers at Stepmore ford, sir."

Sir Otto bit his lip with rage as he listened to these hearty praises of those whom he hated, but he replied:

"Very well. I will see that you shall have full liberty to pilot my troop across the ford. Show me a couch where I may sleep until dawn."

He was obeyed, and at dawn mounted his horse, and attended by the rustic who had offered to assist him in crossing over the ford, rode away in no amiable mood.

"Here is the road to Stepmore Retreat, sir," said the rustic. "Your honour sees the house of Master Stepmore there," he added, when they had ridden several miles. "We must first ask his permission to cross the troop."

"I am not accustomed to ask any man's permission to do ought I desire to do, fellow," replied Sir Otto, haughtily. "Show me the way across the ford, and I will fill your hat with crowns."

"Promises are but air," said the rustic, "and even were your greatness to fill my hat and my boots with crowns, I would not trespass upon the rights of my benefactor."

"I am Sir Otto Dare, Ambassador of the Sovereign of the Turks—" began Sir Otto, but no sooner had

the rustic heard the name of his companion than he wheeled his horse, exclaiming:

"Sir Otto Dare!" and spurred away as if the evil one indeed were after him.

Sir Otto was eager to pursue and punish him, but as the rustic was well mounted, and the ambassador had no time to lose, he hurled a curse after him, and galloped on to where he had crossed the river on the preceding night.

The water had subsided greatly during the night, and as Sir Otto reached the bank of the river he saw that Omrah, his banner-bearer, with his troop, was on the opposite side, about to renew the attempt to cross. Sir Otto was about to ride into the water to meet them, when a man, with a cowl drawn closely about his head and face, seemed to rise from the earth, so suddenly did he appear, and said, in a benignant tone:

"Take care, my son. The fords are badly broken. You should have an experienced guide."

Sir Otto checked his horse just as his fore hoofs were in the water, and turned to gaze at the speaker.

He had evidently once been a very tall man, though now greatly bent. His voice sounded like that of a very old and feeble man, and he leaned upon a staff, with an air which seemed to declare his inability to walk, or even stand, without its aid. He seemed to have just risen from a bed of leaves, as his gray and threadbare gown had many clinging to it.

"Know you aught of the ford?" demanded Sir Otto.

"Indeed, I know it well, my son, and if yonder Infidels attempt to cross without a guide, some of them will face their false prophet in Tophet. I judge they are Infidels, though my eyes are not as they were in my youth."

The blare of Omrah's trumpet sounded at the moment, telling Sir Otto that his followers had recognised him. They had recovered the banner, too, during the night, it having drifted ashore, and as the shrill notes of the trumpet echoed across the now placidly rolling river, its silken folds streamed forth as broadly in the beams of the morning sun as when it startled the heart of Adelia Louvaine the day before.

Sir Otto raised the silver bugle he carried at his saddle bow and blew a note of command, which his followers knew meant that they should halt, and not attempt the passage of the ford.

"You belong to them?" asked the aged man, in a tone of surprise.

"Why not, old man? I am their leader. Now, since you say you know the crossing, instruct me, that I may cross at once."

"I have lived so long in this thankless world that I never grant a favour for nothing," replied the old man, shaking his head; "you consort with Infidels, too, and Christians should not aid them."

"And what if I force thee, old man?"

"No power of man could give strength to these withered limbs, my son, to cross that river on foot."

"But I am strong enough to punish you, if you refuse to direct me."

"Have you lived until your hair is gray and not learned wisdom? A soft word goes farther than a blow, my son."

"What favour do you desire in return, old man?"

"I desire to cross to the other side, my son, and have been waiting here for hours, praying heaven to send me a horseman who desired to cross also."

"And why a horseman?"

"That for my piloting him he would suffer me to ride behind him across the ford."

"Then why said you not so at first?" cried Sir Otto, impatiently.

"You are very old."

"Over fourscore, and, as you see, very feeble."

"Can you manage to get up behind me, old man?"

"You may ride behind, if you will show me how to cross."

"Turn your horse to yonder stump. From thence, with heaven's help, I may climb behind your saddle, if your good steed will permit."

"No fear that he will not," replied Sir Otto, as he rode his stout charger near the stump.

The old man, after much real or feigned difficulty, gained a seat behind Sir Otto, and passing his arms around the body of the knight, said:

"Pardon me if I embrace thee strongly, for my seat is perilous, and unless I cling stoutly to thee, I shall topple off into the stream."

"Grasp as tightly as you desire, old man. I see that, old as you are, there is no little strength in your arms."

"It is fear of being toppled into the river that nerves me. Now move on, and slowly. Straight on. Now averse boldly to the right—so. Now straight on again—there. Now to the left; more—more yet—so. Now straight on again. Heaven preserve me! I had nearly lost my balance, then. Now sharply to the right again, my son."

"Heaven!" exclaimed Sir Otto, as he obeyed these

orders. "The passage is here and there and back again. Would you throw me into the stream?"

"Pardon, my son," replied the old man, whose hands were clasped around Sir Otto's breast. "Again had I nearly lost my hold. More to the left—so. Now, for a matter of ten paces, straight on."

"Idiot?" cried Sir Otto, as his aged and unsteady companion nearly unseated him again. "Were you never astride a horse until now? Grasp me more firmly. Sit steady, so. We are half-way now, are we not?"

They were now in the middle of the stream, and the water was as deep as the horse's shoulder, flowing rapidly.

"Halt," said the old man, whose hands had not been employed alone in retaining a firm hold around the breast of the knight.

Hitherto, however, his arms had been passed under Sir Otto's, but as the latter brought his horse to a halt, the old man thrust his long legs under those of the knight, forcing his spur-armed heels out from the flanks of the steed, and slipping his arms from under those of his companion, cast them around Sir Otto's, binding them as if with hoops of steel.

"Dog!" cried Sir Otto, as he found himself thus suddenly pinioned. "What means this?"

"I have thee now, renegade hound," said the deep voice of the outlaid earl, for the old man was no other than he whom we have called Edwin Hume.

"I have the contents of the casket too, which thou stolest."

And in truth the left hand of the earl grasped a roll of manuscripts and parchment which he had plucked from Sir Otto's bosom.

"Do you know me, renegade?"

Sir Otto made a furious attempt to release his arms, and then his legs. But great as was his strength it was of no avail, taken at advantage as he was, against that of his captor.

His furious effort to free himself simply convinced him that his antagonist had him completely at his mercy.

"Do you know me, Sir Otto?" again demanded the earl.

Sir Otto twisted his head around so as to gain a view of the flaming eyes and threatening face of the speaker, and replied:

"Rascal! You are he who played me false yesterday; Edwin Hume, you called yourself—servant of Sir Bertram Stepmore. Would you rob me in sight of my troop, madman?"

"Have you forgotten Edgar Sheldon, Earl of Hereford?" demanded the earl.

"Ah!" exclaimed Sir Otto, as a chill of fear crept over him. "He is dead! I saw him die! You are not he!"

"Liar! He is not dead, nor did you see him die, though you stabbed him with intent to slay him yonder in Germany; I am he."

Sir Otto shuddered, but made no reply. His eyes were fixed upon his troop on the river-side, for the keen-eyed Omrah had perceived the perilous position of his chief, and was in the act of ordering the Moslems to the rescue.

"Hope not, Sir Otto," said the earl. "No aid can reach you speedily. Have you forgotten that when I was, as all thought, a dying man, dying of fever yonder in Germany, I sent for a priest to confess my sins and impart to him an important secret, you, evil one that you are and ever have been, hearing of my wish, and having learned that I was once a noble of England, had yourself introduced as a father confessor, heard my confession, learned my secret, the secret of a queen, learned where to find the proofs of that secret, and then for absolution thrust your dagger into my breast! I say, hound, have you forgotten that?"

Still Sir Otto made no reply, for his heart beat high and fast with the hope that his Moslems might arrive in time to rescue him. Omrah and all, except the scrivener and his clerk, had dashed into the stream, and were urging their horses towards their leader, and Sir Otto awaited the slightest relaxation of the iron embrace of his wily and formidable enemy, to snatch at his dagger.

"You thought you had slain me, renegade," continued the earl, "and armed with the secret you had stolen from my lips, you came to England to seize the proofs, to win the favour of Queen Elizabeth, to wed by royal authority Adelia Louvaine, and then to hope to force her and yourself, step by step, upon the throne of England. Dreams, renegade dog! all foolish dreams. Get thee to thy Moslem place of torment, for earth is tired to thee!"

As the earl spoke these last fierce words he suddenly hurled Sir Otto upwards from the saddle and high over his own head, for an instant lying almost flat upon his back upon the haunches of the horse as he accomplished the feat.

Sir Otto, encumbered as he was with his armour, and hurled into deep water, sank like lead, and his

days would have ended there but for one of those strange accidents which sometimes save the lives of the most hopeless.

The reader will remember that on the day before Omrah had slain the horse of the earl with his spear. The body of the horse had disappeared beneath the water, and the torrent had swept it along the bottom of the river until it had become wedged among some rocks, where it had remained all night, the gases of decay generating in the swelling carcass until a slight jar was sufficient to free it from the rocks and carry it to the surface.

This jar was a heavy shock as the knight descended upon it through but three or four feet of water; and as it was now buoyant with gas, as a huge bladder, it arose to the surface with Sir Otto clinging to it.

The earl had not paused to see his enemy disappear beneath the water, but had sprang into the saddle from which he had hurled him, wheeled the startled steed, and turned his head towards the shore which he and Sir Otto had just left, and spurred away, thrusting into his bosom, as he did so, the packet of manuscript and parchment.

He had not gone ten paces when a shrill cry sounded keenly over the water, his horse wheeled again towards the middle of the river, and despite his efforts to restrain him, began to caper, and plunge towards the deep water.

It was Omrah who had uttered the cry so well understood and obeyed by the Arab steed now bestrode by the earl—Omrah, the banner-bearer, who had left the rescue of Sir Otto to his comrades, and boldly urged his horse into the deep water to pursue the earl.

Omrah continued to utter the shrill cry of recall to the steed—a cry repeated by every Moslem; his own horse, and those of all his companions, neighing vehemently, as they had been trained to do, to secure the return of any lost or wandering steed of their number. The animal ridden by the earl neighed in reply, and made frantic efforts to reach his Arab friends, so that the earl was forced to throw himself from the saddle, to avoid being carried among the rapidly approaching Moslems.

The water where he thus desperately leaped into the river was deep enough to cover his shoulders, so that his retreat towards the shore was necessarily slow and laborious.

Yet he was so far in advance of any of his pursuers that he had almost reached the shore when Omrah, having swum his horse across the deep water, arrived upon the shallow bottom of the same side.

At this moment the man whom Sir Blaise had called Reuben Maybold appeared suddenly from among the dense foliage at the river's edge and hastened to meet the almost exhausted earl, as the latter struggled up the steep bank.

"Here take my hand, friend," cried Maybold, as he clung to a shrub with one hand, leaned forward and stretched his other hand for the grasp of the earl.

The latter raised his eyes, half prostrate as he was, and stared at the face of the speaker.

One glance, keen and rapid, passed between them, and the earl seized the outstretched hand with a fierce cry of joy, as he exclaimed:

"I have thee at last, Martiresford! Assassin of Queen Mary, though I die for it, Mary of Scotland shall be avenged!"

"I would have aided thee to escape thy enemies!" cried Maybold, as he struggled to escape from the grasp of the outlaid earl.

"And I take no aid from the hand that struck off the head of Queen Mary!" replied the earl as he drew the man towards him, bearing him to the ground, and striking at his throat.

Omrah was still many yards distant, and there seemed no hope for Reuben Maybold. The mere mention of his real name, and of his deed, had made him faint and weak, while the earl seemed filled with the fury and strength of a madman on recognising him as the executioner of the unfortunate Mary of Scotland.

All seemed about to be over with Maybold, when an active female form sprang down the bank, seized a heavy stone lying at the water's edge, and hurled it with all her force against the head of the earl. He sank down heavily, rolled over upon his back, and his limbs quivered but for an instant.

"Art hurt, Reuben?" asked the female, anxiously, as the man struggled to his feet.

"Not much, my lady; but it is an omen, an evil omen of my coming fate. One has recognised me, and others will," replied Maybold, as he staggered and sat down, ghastly and pale, his arms and hands gashed and bleeding. "It is fate! I needed but to have kept on my way, and perhaps he had never seen me. It is fate! I went to help a struggling man, and lo! the struggling man recognises me, and strives to slay me, though, as heaven is my judge, never

have I seen this man until now, Mistress Maudstone. But here comes one of those from whom he sought to escape," he added, as Omrah galloped through the shallow water towards them.

(To be continued.)

THE PROPHECY.

BY THE

Author of "Oliver Darvel," "Michel-deer," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

At nine o'clock a handsome carriage drove to the gate, in which were Mrs. Whitney and her three children. Room was made for Mrs. Ashford on the back seat, the three little girls were placed on the opposite one, and the nurse sat beside the driver, in charge of Aubrey, the eldest son, while her mistress took her baby boy on her own lap.

"Dear Laura," said the happy little woman, "I am so glad to see you again. It is a month or more since I came to the Vale; but Sidney has been fretful and ailing, and I was afraid to leave him to the care of servants. I hoped you would be able to make a visit, now that you have an efficient servant to leave in charge of your domestic affairs. When I saw you last, I thought you were looking brighter and happier than you have seemed for a long time; but to-day you are pale, and have an air of depression I am sorry to see."

"Never mind me, or my looks, Carrie. I shall soon brighten up in such pleasant company as we are going to enjoy to-day. It is a treat to spend so many hours with Mrs. Melrose. Don't you find her charming?"

"Yes, indeed; she has the wisdom of age, united with the elasticity and hopefulness of youth, a combination as rare as it is delightful; yet she has had troubles, and disappointments too, in her day."

"Yes, such as are inevitable: one can bear the visitations of the Creator with fortitude; but it is very difficult to endure with philosophy the wrongs perpetrated by His creatures."

Mrs. Whitney assented to this truth, and in the silence that followed she wondered what new phase of torture for his wife Ashford had developed since she became in a measure independent of him. The weary air of her old friend assured her that her late tranquillity was at an end, and that something to trouble her seriously had occurred.

Mrs. Whitney presently asked:

"Do you find Violet much trouble? She seems quiet, and easily managed."

"She is a dear little creature; she is very fond of me, as I am of her; yet I almost regret I had not given her up to Mrs. Melrose, as she wished."

"Why so? If the child is a comfort to you, you should be glad to keep her."

"I should have thought of her; not of myself."

"Mr. Ashford is well contented to keep her. Indeed, I scarcely think he could gain as much as easily in any other way."

"Oh, yes, that is true; my husband does not think of sending her away. I was thinking of—well never mind what, Carrie."

Fanty had been playing with the chubby fingers of the infant, and she now looked up into his mother's face, and softly said:

"How glad you must be that you have two children, for if one went away from you, there would still be somebody to stay with you."

"Really, Fanty, how precociously wise you are! Who would have suspected you of so much foresight?" said Mrs. Whitney, laughing. "But I hope you are not thinking of eloping from your mother, that you are so anxious to provide her with another daughter!"

"No; I shan't go away from her willingly; but maybe I can't help myself. Father thinks I can be a great woman, if I mind what he says; mother isn't willing for me to try. If Violet was my mother's own child, she'd say I might do as father wants me to."

"Goodness! what does the child mean? A great woman, indeed! You're nothing but a baby yet, and it is absurd for your father to put notions in your head that may ruin your whole life."

"I am nearly nine years old!" replied Fantasia, with as grave an air as if she had claimed to be eighty. "I have read nearly all of Shakespeare, and I can declaim some speeches from his plays."

"Your father has taught you, I suppose; and he has flattered you until you begin to believe yourself an infant phenomenon. I don't wonder at your mother's sad looks now."

"She ought not to look sad, for I mean to give her ever so much money. I'm going to be a fairy queen, and I'm studying the part of Titania in *Midsummer Night's Dream*."

"It is what you will never make with your ma's consent, you grave little owl; and if you don't gain that, you will be a bad and ungrateful child to do as your father wishes you to."

Fantasia drew herself up with such dignity as she could assume, and demurely said:

"The owl is the bird of wisdom; so you see it's a compliment to be compared to one."

"I begin to understand now why your late cheerfulness is all gone, Laura. Is it really true that Mr. Ashford threatens to take your child from you, and place her in such a hot-bed as she must live in, if he makes her an actress?"

"I have not had courage to tell you before, but I am afraid such is my husband's intention. He thinks Fantasia has great dramatic ability, and he has taken pains to cultivate it for months past. Her progress is something wonderful, I must confess; but to keep her my own pure, loving child, I would rather see her even dull and commonplace."

Fantasia tossed her small head, and oracularly said: "Money is power," father tells me, and of course he knows. But I don't think so much about that, as I do about the crowns and the flowers that will be thrown to me when the people all rise up and clap their hands, because they have found in me the wonder of the world."

"So that is the temptation offered to your poor vain little heart! But, Fanty, people are as often hissed on the stage as applauded. I daresay you have had a flock of geese fly at you in a rage, but that is nothing to the clamour of a disappointed audience. How would you stand being hissed in place of flowers?"

Fantasia proudly replied:

"Such a disgrace could not happen to me, for I am sure of success; that is, if mother will let me try. I couldn't go away from her; so she'll have to come with me."

"Really, you and your father seem to have settled matters to your own satisfaction; but if I were your mother, I should have something to say as to the disposal of my own child."

"Do you suppose that I have not already used every argument likely to move my husband?" said Mrs. Ashford. "All was vain, Carrie. It is like dashing myself against a wall of iron, to oppose the will of Mr. Ashford in what he has once determined on."

"I have always hoped that Fanty would be a comfort to you, as an atonement for all you have gone through, and it seems so sad that she is to become an additional cause of anxiety to you."

Mrs. Whitney sighed as she looked at the mother and child, and pitied both with all her womanly heart. She passed her hand over Fantasia's dark hair, and said:

"Cling always to your mother, Fanty, for no affection can replace hers. No heart will triumph in your success as hers will; even if it be one in a career she cannot approve."

"Yes, I shall love mother best of all. I won't go away without her; I told father so yesterday evening. Here's Harry coming to meet us on his pony. Oh, dear! what a beautiful little horse it is! I mean to have one like it, and a hat with a red feather, when I make money of my own."

"The poor child's head is actually turned with the flatteries lately lavished upon her," said her mother, with a pained smile. "Don't heed her nonsense, Carrie."

"I'd like to ride, and I'm going to ask Harry to teach me how to sit on his pony."

The manly-looking boy came swiftly towards them, managing his steed with the careless grace of one accustomed to the saddle from early childhood. His father had taught him to ride as soon as he was old enough to sit upon a horse, and he was not afraid to back the wildest one upon the place, though he was not often allowed to use any other than the pony, which was considered his especial property. The best understanding existed between the two, and Selim obeyed every sign made him by his youthful master. Only on one point was he intractable: he would allow no one, save Harry, to mount him.

The lad was dressed in a full suit of white linen, his shirt collar fastened with a knot of crimson ribbon, and a band of the same colour on the wide straw hat that shaded his bright face from the beams of the sun. The coloured ribbon was a fancy of his grandmother's and Harry dutifully submitted to wear it, though he privately thought he was far too manly to dress himself in gay colours, as a girl might do.

He reined in his diminutive courser, and lifted his hat, with his frank smile, as he said:

"Good morning, ladies. As I had no lessons to-day, I thought I would come to meet you, and open the gates for you when we come to our grounds. Grandma thought I had better make myself useful in that way, than to stay at home wondering when you would make your appearance. It is ten o'clock by this time, and we thought you meant to spend a long day with us."

"My dear Harry, we must try and make the most of what is left," replied the lady, laughing. "Why don't you speak to Fanty? She is half wild to learn how to ride on Selim."

"I thought all the babies were asleep; how do you do, Fanty? I am afraid the pony won't allow you to mount him, though; for he has a notion that I am the only one who has the right to do so."

"I am not a baby, thank you, Harry Melrose, and I can ride in a carriage without going to sleep. I don't care about riding your pony, if you teach him such bad manners that he won't let little girls get on his back."

"I never taught him that; it's his own cleverness that makes him shake off the little boys that try to ride him. Perhaps he'll show better breeding when a little lady tries to manage him. When we get to Melrose, if your mamma will allow you, we can see what Selim will do."

"No, Harry, not for the world. If anything happened to Fanty when she is away with me, her father would never forgive me," said Mrs. Ashford. "The child would risk anything to gain her will; but I trust you to have your pony put away where she will not be tempted to do what I must forbid."

"Harry's pony is such a little creature, that if he did shake me off he wouldn't hurt me," pouted Fanty. "I'm not a bit afraid of him, and I know I could manage him as well as he does."

"Perhaps so, Fanty," was the laughing response; "but you know I am a famous rider, for a boy. I won the silver spur offered last year at the cattle show for the best horseman under twelve years of age."

"Horseman, indeed, when you are only a boy, and you rode a pony!" came contemptuously from Fantasia.

"A boy is a man in miniature, and I had papa's big Blackamoor to ride. He's so gentle, he would let me put you on him, if your heart is set on a canter on horseback."

"If I can't ride Selim, I won't go at all," was the ungracious response.

By this time they were approaching a gate which opened into the private grounds of Melrose, and Harry rode forward to open it for the passage of the carriage. This road was only used in summer, when the dust of the highway was annoying, and it wound in picturesque curves over hill and dale, shaded by gigantic trees the greater part of the way.

The clock was striking the half-hour after ten as the vehicle drew up in front of the old-fashioned house, and Mrs. Melrose, attended by the smiling Betty, came to the door to meet and welcome her guests.

"I could not reasonably have expected you to be here sooner, my dears; but I have been looking for you for the last half-hour. Harry was so restless, I thought it best to send him to meet you. Come in; luncheon will soon be ready."

By the time the two ladies had brushed off the dust, smoothed their hair, and performed such ablutions as were necessary, Betty, in obedience to orders, had swept off Mrs. Whitney's nurse and all the children to "Paradise," as Harry's play-room was called. There, a plain dinner, neatly served, was soon after placed upon the oval table between two large windows, and Harry did the honours to his small guests. The second course was a rice pudding, with late peaches served as dessert, and there was just one for each child.

Fantasia rather contemptuously said:

"I suppose you count months here, and give a bite to each one. At home I can eat as much fruit as I want."

"So you may here, if you will come out with me into the orchard after dinner is over. Grandma ordered that only enough fruit for the little children should be served. You are getting to be quite a big girl, Fanty, and I am almost a man, so we are free to take what we like. Rachel and Betty will stay with the babies, while we take a nice walk."

Fantasia felt rather ashamed of her rude speech, and she hastened to accept the invitation. Violet lifted up her small voice, and begged to accompany them; but this was decidedly vetoed by both, as she was much too small to bear the fatigue of such a scamper as her elders contemplated. She was consoled for the disappointment by the opening of a large closet in which Harry's discarded toys were stored away, and such a collection as there was of tailless horses, broken-nosed soldiers, and dilapidated dogs was surely never seen before. But the children were enchanted. Harry and Fantasia set out to explore the orchard.

The sun was very hot, and they were soon glad to seek shelter beneath a wide-spreading tree and enjoy the peaches Harry gathered and carried in his hat to the spot they selected. It was a sloping bank, green with moss and grass, and close beside them was a hedge of hawthorn and sweetbriar rose, densely matted together.

They ate the peaches, chatted amicably together, and were on the best of terms. Suddenly Fantasia started up, and said:

"I am going to act for you, Harry. You think yourself so much of a man, that I am going to show you that I can do something you can't. Shall I be Hamlet, or Richard III.?"

"Whichever you please; but I am sure I sha'n't like you as either. How can a little girl pretend to be a man! I saw *Hamlet* performed when papa took me to London last year, and I've read about the Hunchback King in my history of England. Who set you to doing anything so funny, Fanny?"

"Funny, indeed! That's all you know about it. Listen now, and see if there is any fun in what I am going to repeat."

Fantasia threw herself into an attitude, and went through her declamation in her best style, for she had a keen desire to astonish the young critic, who lolled on the bank, fanning himself with his hat. When she finished, she stood with half-parted lips and flashing eyes, her head bent slightly forward, eagerly waiting the meed of expected praise.

Harry lazily said:

"I dare say it is very nice; but you are mistaken if you think I could not do as well, if I tried. But what's the use of your learning all that, Fanny?"

"I will answer that question, my young friend," said a voice from above the hedge; and looking up, the two children saw a tall, dark man, dusty and travel-stained, with a broad-brimmed straw hat upon his head, peeping down upon them.

His hair, beard, and eyebrows were gray, but his black eyes were full of fire, and his face was one by no means calculated to inspire perfect confidence in the pair of little rustics, who gazed with startled eyes on this unexpected apparition.

The stranger jauntily said:

"Don't be alarmed, my pretty babes. I am only a wayfarer, idling away a few hours of leisure in these sylvan shades. I hardly expected, when I fell asleep on this side of the hedge, to be so pleasantly awakened. Little girl, what is your name? You are a prodigy, child—a pro-di-gy, if you only know it."

"But I do know it," replied Fantasia, "for father says I am to be the wonder of the world."

The man stared at her a moment, and then laughed aloud. He presently said:

"Bravo! Genius will assert itself, somebody said, and I believe it is true; but you are a small specimen to foretell your own greatness in so cool a manner. The wonder of the world! Well, perhaps you may, if you are to make your mark as an actress. You'll develop into something wonderful in that line, and I speak what I know, for I am qualified to judge."

By this time Harry had risen to his feet, and he nodded to the stranger, and said:

"As I said, sir, it will be no use to Fanny to learn all that, for she will never go on the stage, if that is what you mean. Her mother is my grandmamma's friend, and she won't let her little girl go with acting people."

"How strait-laced we are, to be sure!" said the stranger, with a sneer. "Acting people, as you call them, have a pride of their own that is not inferior to yours, young sir, and it is founded on far better grounds. They use the talents confided to them, and win respect and fortune as the just meed of their exertions. None, save the ignorant or prejudiced, look down upon a calling which, to succeed in, requires genius of no common order."

Fantasia made a pirouette, clapped her hands, and cried out, in irrepressible excitement:

"That is why father made me learn all those things from Shakespeare."

"Well, he's a sensible man not to thwart nature. Who is your father, may I ask?"

"Oh! yes, you may. His name is Ashford, and we live at the Vale, four miles from here. I am only spending the day at Melrose, and we are going back home this evening."

At the name, the stranger's brow contracted slightly, and he abruptly said:

"I know something of your father, then, and I have business to settle with him before I leave the neighbourhood. Is he here?"

"No, sir; he has gone to old Mr. Roberts's sale, but he'll be home by night."

"Good-bye, now; I think I shall take my supper with my old chum, Ashford, and tell him what a treasure he possesses in his daughter."

He disappeared as suddenly as he had arisen, and the two children stood looking at each other, until Fantasia burst into an elfish laugh, and cried out:

"What ails you, Harry? You look as if you had seen a goblin. I think him a very nice man, and I hope he'll get father to let me dance before people, even if I'm not big enough to act yet."

"Oh! Harry, how can you want to do anything that—that will—"

The lad paused, and Fantasia indignantly asked: "That will—what, Harry Melrose? Why don't you finish what you began to say?"

"Because I don't exactly know what I mean," frankly replied Harry. "Somehow, I think it's wrong to caper about in a spangled dress for money; and you need not do it, you know, for your papa has a nice farm, and old Falconer left all his money to your mamma."

"And all of it wasn't much. Father says, some day I'll make—oh! ever so much more! You'll see, Harry; and when I'm as rich as cream, I expect you'll want to marry me."

The incipient coquette flashed her large black eyes upon him, and smiled in a most provoking way. Harry was a little disconcerted, but he regained courage to say:

"If I want you at all, Fanny, it wouldn't be for your money; and I tell you plainly I wouldn't have it, if my sweetheart had earned it as you mean to do. Girls have no business to be turning into actor women."

"I mean to make it my business, anyway, whether you like it or not. If you wanted me! You will some day; but you won't get me, that's all. You may take Violet when she's big enough. She'll never want to be an actor woman."

"I hope not," replied the lad, composedly. "Shall we go in now? They may miss us, you know, and we had better go back before we are asked for."

"I want to see Selim. Take me to the stable before we go in. Now, Harry, do be good, and let me pat the nice little fellow. I want some hairs out of his mane too, for Rachel told me if I would put them into spring water they'd turn to snakes."

"Then you'll not get any of them, I can tell you. I'm not going to have my pony's mane used to make such horrid things. It's all foolishness too, and I wonder at you for listening to such trash."

"I don't believe it's true, but I only wanted to try. There's no harm in that, I'm sure."

"You won't try it with Selim's hair—nor you can't see him either, for your mamma asked me not to let you go near him."

"But I'm going, and I mean to mount him too, and take my first lesson in riding from you."

Harry said:

"If you choose to risk your neck on Selim, you can do it; but you must tell the truth to your mother, that you would do it. I'll not run and tell tales of you, even if I don't like what you're going to do."

Harry sullenly followed Fantasia's lead, and they presently came to a large pasture opening from the stable yard, in which Selim had been turned loose. The lad laughed and slapped his hands.

"Oh, ho! my little lady, you won't get your will to-day."

"Why sha'n't I? At the sound of your voice, the pony comes trotting towards us, and if you don't catch him, Harry, and put on his bridle, I'll never speak to you again."

"I wouldn't care much if you never did," came promptly to Harry's lips; but as he uttered the words, his eyes fell on the flashing face of this small imperious, and he could not help thinking it would not be pleasant to lose the friendship of such a bright little creature as this. Somehow he always did what Fanny bade him, and every time she had visited Melrose they had got into mischief, and been sent into the valley of humiliation for it.

Almost involuntarily the pony was whistled to his side, and he came cantering towards him, his long mane and tail floating in the wind, for Harry sturdily refused to have him cropped.

"See how gentle he is; I am sure there is nothing to be afraid of," said Fantasia, triumphantly, as the pony laid his head over the shoulder of his young master.

"There is Ben at the stable door; call him to bring the bridle, Harry."

"But how are you to ride without a saddle? Indeed, Fanny, you must not think of it."

"Indeed I shall think of it, and do it too. Have your saddle put on him. I am not afraid to trust my self on that."

Thus urged, the saddle was brought forth and fitted on the pony, who suffered himself to be caparisoned very quietly. Then Fanny said:

"Make haste, and put me on his back. You may hold the reins this time, because I have to hold on with both hands to this saddle."

"Please, Fanny, think better of it. You'll be thrown off as sure as we live, and your mamma will blame me for letting you ride at all."

"I'll tell her you couldn't help yourself. There, speak to your pony, and tell him how to behave with a girl on his back."

With the activity of a cat, she mounted the bars of the gate, and sprang into the saddle, without waiting for his reluctant assistance, and then triumphantly laughed from her perch.

"I'm safe on him; now lead him around."

The pony looked startled; but the hand of his young master on the bridle rein kept him in order, and the three traversed the length of the pasture in safety, coming back to the bars without any restive demonstrations from the well-trained little animal.

"Now give me the reins, Harry, and keep by my side. I can guide him; and when I get back here I declare I will get off, and go into the house with you."

Remonstrance proved useless, and the reins were placed in her hands. Free from the stronger grasp of the boy's hand, Selim threw up his head, and commenced some very daring capricious with his unaccustomed rider. Harry was alarmed, and sprang to her assistance; but the wilful child, bent on showing him that she was competent to manage Selim alone, gave the bridle a sudden shake, and the pony darted forward a few yards, threw up his hind feet, and Fantasia fell stunned and senseless to the earth.

The cry uttered by Harry when his wilful companion fell from the pony's back, not only brought the stable-boy to his assistance, but it was heard by the dark stranger who had so lately accosted them. He was crossing a hill, which commanded a view of the pasture, and he stopped on its summit to watch the two children, speculating in his own mind on the chances that one of them might become a valuable prize to himself.

Chance had brought Mr. Claude Benton to these quiet shades, for he had few rural tastes, and little fondness for the country. He was the manager of a theatrical company, which, in summer, travelled from place to place, performing wherever sufficient inducements were found; and his corps of actors were now in Greenville, delighting the rustic population by their representations.

The manager found himself indisposed, and fancying a pedestrian tour would prove more beneficial to him than medicine, he set out to explore the surrounding country, leaving his company temporarily under the control of his leading tragedian.

Benton was aware that his old acquaintance, Ashford, lived somewhere in the vicinity, and as there was an old score to settle up with him, he intended to inquire of his whereabouts, and, if possible, see him before he left the country. He congratulated himself on the chance which had made known to him the talents of Fantasia, for he knew that he was the last one whom her father would have wished to become aware of the gem he possessed.

These two men had once been friends and allies; they had started in life together, and the persuasion of Benton had led Ashford to adopt, for a season, the calling to which his own life had been devoted. But the latter had little histrionic talent, and he had overacted the parts entrusted to him in such a manner as to bring down the hisses of the audience more than once.

Disgusted with his want of success, Ashford became scene painter, and also took charge of the treasury during a season of unexampled prosperity; but when the accounts came to be settled, the money received had disappeared in a mysterious manner, and after a stormy interview with Benton, Ashford thought discretion the better part of valour, and disappeared, leaving no clue behind him.

Benton submitted to the loss, and made few efforts to trace his dishonest agent. He comforted himself with the thought that in his wandering life he should discover him again, and extort from his debtor both principal and interest of the sum of which he had been defrauded.

Seventeen years had elapsed since those occurrences, and at Greenville, for the first time, he heard news of his former friend. He learned there that Ashford had become a teacher of drawing and modern languages in a young ladies' school—had married the principal, and with a few thousand pounds obtained with her hand, had purchased a farm in a neighbouring valley, upon which he now resided.

A pedestrian tour was at once decided on as the best means of restoring the health of the manager, and he set out in quest of the man who had so long evaded him. While resting in the shade of the hedge, he listened dreamily to the conversation of the two children on the other side; but when Fantasia proposed to declaim Hamlet's soliloquy for the benefit of her young companion, he arose and watched her, at first with a contemptuous smile; but this faded away, and an expression of delighted surprise came upon his face as he recognised in this bright-looking child a genius for the stage, which promised most brilliant success in the maturity of her powers. He could not resist the impulse to give her the meed of applause she seemed so eager to receive, yet which was withheld by her companion, and he uttered what he knew to be true—that the ambitious little exhibitor was a dramatic prodigy. When he learned who Fantasia really was, his mind was at once made up to lose no time in bringing to bear his claims upon her father.

He had paused in his walk over the hill to watch the children, and he felt some uneasiness when he saw the girl mounted on the pony, which she evidently did not know how to guide.

"Umph!" he muttered. "If that child only knew her own value she would not risk getting her head cracked, or some of her limbs broken. What a vain little fire-spirit she is! ready for any mischief, I daresay, or she would not be Hiram Ashford's daughter. He stole money from me, and now I'll take more than money's worth from him. He has trained the child, hoping to make her a good speculation, but I will take the lion's share of the spoil, Mr. Ashford, and you dare not say me nay. Good heavens! there goes my argosy to wreck! she has fallen on her head, as I live! I must see what damage she has received, for she is too precious a commodity to be neglected."

Hurriedly striding down the hill, he sprang over the fence, and approached the scene of the disaster.

(To be continued.)

FACETIÆ.

ONE of the most curious things with which we are acquainted is that a watch should keep so perfectly dry when it has a running spring inside.

CALL a lady a "chicken," and ten to one she will be angry with you. Tell her she is "no chicken," and twenty to one she will be more angry still.

AN old man of our acquaintance says he was born at the wrong time. "When I was young," he says, "young men were of no account; and now that I am old, old men are of no account."

AN advertisement catches the attention of confectioners to the fact that the advertiser has charge of the sweeping of all the metropolitan theatres, and has for sale several cwt. of orange peel in good condition. It has probably been made up before this into marmalade and plum-cake.

AN UNFOUNDED RUMOUR.

"Bill, when are you going to Havre?"
"Oh, Tom, that rumour about my marriage is unfounded. I'm not going to have her at all."

VELOCIPEDES are all the rage. All the dandies, the *gandins* and the *cocodés*, are rattling about the Bois on these strange instruments of locomotion. A French baron has bet 5,000*fr.* that he will ride on his velocipede across a tight-rope after a month's practice.

A YANKEE in Paris, who was listening to the boast of some English and French artists about the wonderful genius of their respective countrymen, at last "broke out," and said, "Oh, psaw! youn git out! Why, there's Bill Devine, of our village, who kin paint a piece of cork so 'tactly like marble, that the minute you throw it into the water it will sink to the bottom 'jes like a stone."

A CELEBRATED divine, who prided himself upon the originality of his sermons, was once told, jocularly, that a sermon he had preached was excellent. "But," said the wag who told him, "I had previously read every word of it in a book I have at home." The astonished clergyman begged for a sight of the volume. "Oh, I have no doubt you have the same book in your library. It is Johnson's Dictionary."

WINE IN SMALL DOSES.

"Will you have some grapes, monsieur?" asked a gentleman of a Frenchman.

"No, sare," he replied; "I don't swallow my wine in ze shape of pills."

WHEN Dr. Johnson had completed his dictionary which had quite exhausted the patience of Mr. Andrew Millar, his bookseller, the latter acknowledged the receipt of the last sheet in the following note: "Andrew Millar sends his compliments to Dr. Samuel Johnson, with the money for the last sheet of the Dictionary, and thanks heaven he has done with him." Johnson replied he was happy to find Mr. Millar thanked heaven for anything.

DIETETIC.—A young lady from the seminary at M— being asked at the table if she would have some cabbage, replied: "By no means; gastronomical satiety admonishes me that I have arrived at the ultimate culinary degeneration consistent with the code of Esculapius." As she drew back from the table, it was concluded that she meant she had "eaten a great quantity."

CURE FOR THE GOUT.—The following cure for the gout is taken from an old work:—First, The person must pick a handkerchief from the pocket of a maid of fifty years, who has never had a wish to change her condition. Second, He must wash it in an honest miller's pond. Third, He must dry it on a parson's hedge who was never covetous. Fourth, He must send it to a doctor's shop who never killed

a patient. Fifth, he must mark it with a lawyer's ink who never cheated a client. Sixth, Apply it to the part affected, and a cure will speedily follow.

AN ignorant fellow, who was about to get married, resolved to make himself perfect in the response of the marriage service; but by mistake he committed to memory the office of baptism for those of riper years; so when the clergyman asked him in the church, "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?" the bridegroom answered in a solemn tone, "I renounce them all." The astonished minister said, "I think you are a fool," to which he replied, "All this I steadfastly believe."

THE following interesting, but apparently rather sensational piece of news is going the rounds of the German papers. It is said that in fifty years St. Petersburg will have ceased to exist. The whole soil on which it stands is sinking, imperceptibly it is true, but with fearful regularity, and the examination that has been made has turned out so unfavourably that steps are being taken preparatory to removing the court, of course, to Constantinople.

TO A STARR.

Think you'll sink a little, Starr,
When Hull ponders what you are—
Up above the world so long,
Now to flounder with the throng!

—Tomahawk.

THE result of going out for a "lark" very generally is, that the last part of the lark you see is the beak.—Punch.

COUNTRY CHILDREN.

LITTLE fresh violets,
Born in the wild wood;
Sweetly illustrating
Innocent childhood!
Shy as the antelope—
Brown as a berry—
Free as the mountain air—
Romping and merry!
Blue eyes and hazel eyes
Peep from the hedges,
Shaded by sun-bonnets
Frayed at the edges!
Up in the apple-trees,
Heedless of danger,
Manhood in embryo
Stares at the stranger!
Out in the hilly patch,
Seeking for berries—
Under the orchard tree,
Feasting on cherries—
Tramping the clover blooms
Down 'mong the grasses,
No voice to hinder them—
Dear lads and lasses!

No grim propriety—
No interdiction;
Free as the birdlings
From city restriction!
Cointing the purest blood—
Strength'n'g each muscle—
Donning health armour
'Gainst life's coming bustle!

Dear little innocents,
Born in the wildwood;
Oh, that all little ones
Had such a childhood!
God's blue spread over them—
God's green beneath them:
No sweeter heritage
Could we bequeath them!

M. A. K.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LEMON CHEESE CAKES.—Boil the peel of three lemons, and pound thin whilst hot; then mix with it a quarter of a pound of butter, ditto of sugar, the juice of three lemons, and the yolks of five eggs. Bake them in small patty pans, with a thin crust.

A CHEAP AND GOOD WHITENESS.—Dissolve 6 lb. of fine white pipe-clay in as much water as will make it as thick as paint; soak and dissolve ½ lb. of good glue; add and mix well; then add ½ lb. of fat or dripping of any kind, put on the fire and boil a few minutes, and use while hot. The fat being boiled with the pipe-clay forms a kind of insoluble soap, which, if used while hot, defies all kinds of weather. It may be coloured to suit the taste.

CULTURE OF GINGER.—The ginger plant is grown in tropical countries in the open fields, in hot, dry, limey land, not in any way rich. It might be grown in England in any hothouse or pine house, in oblong earthenware pans, 2 feet long by 1 foot wide, 6 or 8

inches deep, and 1 inch thick, with three holes in each side for drainage. These pans could be placed on the top of the hot-water pipes without doing the pipes any harm. One box of roots should be retained every year to plant-out in the following season; the rest should be made use of whilst young. As soon as taken up, the roots should be peeled, then put into stoneware jars, after which hot syrup, made of good sweet brown sugar, should be poured on the roots until the jars are quite full. We cannot say how the syrup is made, nor do we think it is ever made so well in England as it is in the West Indies, where the ginger is always made use of when in a young state; whereas the Chinese is too old, strung, and hot.

STATISTICS.

At the last census it was calculated that in parts of England maintaining a population less in numbers than that of London there were living in one room 34,918 families with four persons in each family; 27,519 families with five persons in each family; 19,508 families with six persons in each family; 12,136 families with seven persons in each family; and 6,212 families with eight persons in each family.

ACCIDENTS on Russian railways are not very common; Russian engine-drivers, who are apt to indulge their liquorous propensities, being discarded on many lines in favour of steady Germans. Yet, as the number of passengers is small, the death-rate by accident is necessarily great. In Prussia it is reckoned that one passenger out of 11,500,000 meets with his death in this way; in Belgium one out of 5,000,000; in Austria one out of 2,400,000; in France one out of 1,760,000; in England one out of 1,650,000; and in Russia one out of 116,541.

MANUFACTURE OF BEADS AT VENICE.—The values of the exports of glass beads from Venice during 1868 were as follows:—To Bombay, Calcutta, Singapore, to the value of 1,860,000 francs; England, 1,470,000 francs; Zanzibar and eastern coast of Africa, 650,000 francs; North America, 570,000 francs; Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, 560,000 francs; West Coast of Africa, 520,000 francs; France, Belgium, and Holland, 467,000 francs; South America, 430,000 francs; Constantinople and the Black Sea, 425,000 francs; Egypt, Tripoli, and Morocco, 375,000 francs; Russia, 280,000 francs; Italy, 78,000 francs; Spain and Portugal, 75,000 francs; Java and Sumatra, 70,000 francs; making a total value of 7,830,000 francs (313,200*l.*)

MISCELLANEOUS.

TWO sea-gulls were shot outside Battersea Park. Both were fine specimens, although suffering from want of food.

EVERY child of a foreigner residing fifty years in France will henceforth be obliged to do military service—it is rumoured.

ANNA GAGARIN, the daughter of a Moscow merchant, is the wealthiest heiress in Russia. Her prospective fortune is estimated at 100,000,000 roubles—about 15,000,000*l.*

It is said that the Zoological Society will remove their collection of animals from Regent's-park to Alexandra-park as soon as the lease of their present ground expires.

THE Chinese Ambassador will quit Paris in about May for Berlin, Russia, Sweden, Italy, and Spain. His peregrinations will extend over a twelvemonth. Surely His Excellency Pigtail Sing ought to visit London.

CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT.—George Pybus, who had been convicted at the February sessions of this court of a robbery with violence and sentenced to ten years penal servitude and twenty-five strokes with the "cat," received the latter part of his sentence from Calcraft, in the presence of Mr. Sheriff Hutton, Mr. Under-Sheriff Croxby, Mr. Jonas, the Governor, and Mr. J. R. Gibson, the surgeon.

THE fourteenth of February ought to be remembered by every nation. It was the day that Charles III., Prince of Monaco, abolished every kind of tax, direct or indirect, in his dominions. It takes away one's breath, such a concession to free trade. His trusty and well-beloved subjects must regard their sovereign as a "good fairy."

AFFECTION BETWEEN ANIMALS.—A short time ago a dog and a sheep were found to be missing from a farm, and were only discovered after a search of three days. The ruminant was found to have brought forth twins, and the faithful dog was still on guard. Sheep and lambs had, of course, not suffered from want of food, but the colley had had nothing either to eat or drink.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

RED DOUGLAS.—Peel's coffee-house, Fleet-street, or Deacon's, 4, Leadenhall-street, London.

G. W. K.—Apply at the College, Queen's-square, W.C., where you will receive every information.

A CONSTANT READER.—Read "Gulliver's Travels," and you will get a full explanation of the word.

AN UNHAPPY WIFE.—Write to the secretary of the society.

ANNE.—If you love life, do not waste time, for that is the ingredient life is composed of.

L. S.—The duty on imported eggs was repealed in 1860, whereby the revenue lost about 20,000 a-year.

RILEY.—The order of the Star of India was instituted by Queen Victoria in 1861.

AGNES.—A promise is a just debt, which should be implicitly paid, for honour and honesty are the security.

Mrs. LEWIS.—We are sorry we cannot offer advice in your matter. Furnish yourself with all the proofs possible, and lay your case before a respectable solicitor.

A CONSTANT READER.—The secretary of the East London Railway Company is Mr. George Edward Cooper, 3, Great Winchester-street-buildings, E.C.

MECHANIC.—The use of street pavements formed of asphalt was introduced into this country under a patent obtained in 1837 by Mr. Clarkidge.

ARNOLD.—Portreeve is derived from the Saxon, and signifies the governor of a port or harbour; the chief magistrate of London was formerly so called.

NOVAL.—It should serve as a comfort to us in all our calamities and afflictions, to know that he who loses anything and gets wisdom by it, is a gainer by the loss.

LAWRENCE.—Peers have their crests placed above their coronets; baronets and commoners have their crests upon their helmets.

ALICE.—Pews in churches were not in use in England until long after the Reformation. The earliest reading pew, with a date, is one at Geddington St. Mary, Northamptonshire, 1602.

C. E.—The Pharisees were a sect among the Jews, so called from a Hebrew word, signifying to separate or set apart, because they pretended to a greater degree of holiness and piety than their brethren.

IVANHOE.—1. The work is out of print many years ago. It would be difficult to obtain a copy. 2. Any bookseller. 3. All in print, 1d. each; any bookseller, or from 334, Strand. Two numbers by post, 1d. extra.

POOR TOMMY.—The clerk's fee varies from 1s. 6d. upwards; the clergyman's, according to circumstances. In the first case we think the charge too much; in the second, moderate. Your friend's present was, of course, quite optional.

A CONSTANT READER.—1. Adopt a vegetable diet as much as possible, refrain from drinking malt liquors, and take plenty of exercise. 2 and 3. See second answer to "Lizzie" in this number. You will find the prescription effective.

MARK.—The Greek phalanx consisted of 8,000 men in a square battalion, with shields joined, and spears crossing each other. The battalion formed by Philip of Macedon was called the Macedonian phalanx, and was instituted by him 390, B.C.

ALFRED.—There are various kinds of pine-trees; the stone-pine, or pinus pinea, was brought into this country about 1549; the cluster pine, or pinus pinaster, came from the south of France about 1596; the Weymouth pine, or pinus strobus, from North America in 1705; also the Frankincense pine, or pinus taeda, about 1713.

OLIVER.—The Pentland Hills are near Edinburgh; it was there that the Scotch Presbyterians, since called Cameronians who had risen against the government, on account of the establishment of episcopacy, were defeated by the royal troops, in 1666. Many of the insurgents were subsequently executed.

MALCOLM.—Marshalling is the arrangement of various coats of arms upon one escutcheon or shield, representing the alliances formed, or the dignities which may have accrued or centred in one individual as the sole representative of several houses. The first quarter must always be charged with the most important arms; the other coats of arms take precedence according as they have been added or brought in "to the general group."

LEON.—The origin of "Knight Rider-street" is known but to few of the present generation. A service of great trust and high consideration, belonging of ancient right to the officers of arms, was the bearing of letters and messages to sovereign princes and persons in authority. Upton, the earliest writer extant on the science of heraldry, says: "It is necessary that all estates should have

dry, says: "It is necessary that all estates should have courtois, as our messengers, for the expedition of their business, whose office is to pass or ropass on foot, these are knights in their offices, but not nobles, and are called Knights Caligate of Arms, because they wear startappes (a sort of boot-stocking) to the middle of the leg; when they have belayed themselves wisely, and served worshipfully in this roomy space of vit yerres, then were they set on horseback, and called 'Chivaliers of Armes' (or Knight Riders), for that they rode on their sovereign's messages." This honourable and important service has in modern times been transferred from the Officers of Arms to certain persons appointed by the Secretary of State, and termed King's or Queen's Messengers; hence the appellation of "Knight Rider-street."

E. MORTIMER.—You have no legal remedy. Write to Canada. Possibly enough he has had a hard struggle to get on, and will do right by you when his prospects brighten. At all events write. You will be able to judge his intentions by his reply or silence. Your handwriting is good.

LIZZIE.—1. Try a mustard emetic; a spoonful-and-a-half mixed in a tumbler of water can be easily taken. Drink largely of milk-warm water during the operation. 2. Flowers of sulphur, half-a-drachm; carbonate of soda, one scruple; tartarised antimony, one-eighth of a grain. One powder night and morning. Avoid excess in diet.

ROSA ELVA.—Your attempt is very creditable for a little girl. The lines are scarcely up to our standard, however. Read Wordsworth and Longfellow, and study for yourself in the great book of nature. Don't be in too great a hurry to get into print, but persevere in your attempts to write, and you will be certain to improve.

A. J. SHAND.—The best book on the subject is Morris's "History of British Birds," in six volumes. The published price is 5s., but you can obtain it for 3s. 7s. This work contains 300 finely-coloured engravings. There is a cheaper book at 3s. 6d. You can obtain it for 2s. 6d. at almost any second-hand bookseller's.

A LOVER OF MEDICAL BOOKS.—Asphyxia is a Greek word, which signifies a cessation of pulsation. It is now used to denote a condition of the system, which there is a cessation of muscular movement, and an accumulation of blood in the veins. The state of asphyxia is that in which the respiratory organs are either temporarily suspended, or have wholly ceased.

THE COQUETTE.

Oh! dwell not on that loving tone
That falls upon thy ear;

Its music was not made for thee;
'Twill fill thy heart with fear.

Let not the pressure of that hand,
So warmly assured to be

Temp't thee to linger. Turn away:
Thou'rt safer when alone.

Such charms as these are not for thee,
For there's no power nor art

Can bind the rosy chain of love
Around a coquette's heart.—A.G.

A. A. A.—If you love each other, and the circumstances are favourable, we do not see any reason why you should not carry out your plan, and become the wife of the gentleman. Your handwriting is too small and indistinct. If you would write larger, it would be a decided improvement.

FOOTLIGHTS.—A ballet is a theatrical representation, in which a story is told by gesture, accompanied by illustrative music, and to which dancing (or mere saltation), scenery, decorations, &c., are the accessories. The word comes from the Italian balletto, to dance. The French enumerate three kinds of ballet, namely, the ballet d'action, or ballet pantomime, the opera ballet, and the comédie ballet.

A. G.—1. Take equal parts of litharge and lime, mix well, and form into a paste with water. Clean the head with a comb, and then wash the hair with soda and water to free it from the grease; then lay on the paste pretty thick, and cover the head with oil-skin or a cabbage leaf, after which go to bed. Next morning the powder should be carefully brushed away, and the hair oiled. 2. Your handwriting is very good; it would be more elegant if you did not make so many flourishes.

MARTHA.—Governesses and tutors are not considered menial or domestic servants, and cannot be discharged at a month's notice, as a servant can, unless there is an express agreement or stipulation to that effect. If hired by the year, and no stipulation is made as to notice on leaving, they can only be dismissed legally at the end of the year. If dismissed at any other time, they are entitled to a year's salary; but if dismissed for misconduct they cannot recover their salary for the portion of the year they have served.

EDWARD.—Paul Jones was a Scotsman, born in 1742, and died in Paris in 1792. He commanded an American privateer during the American war, and was memorable for his daring depredations on British commerce. In 1778 he landed and pillaged the house of Lord Selkirk, near Kilmory, and burnt the shipping in the harbour at Whitehaven. In 1779 the Dutch permitted him to enter their ports with two of the king's ships of war which he had taken, and these the stadtholder promptly refused to deliver up.

P. KNIGHT.—The founder of Doctors' Commons was Dr. Henry Harvey, doctor of the civil and canon law, and master of the Trinity Hall in Cambridge, a prebendary of Ely, a dean (or judge) of the Archdeacon, he purchased a house for the doctors to live in, in common together, hence the name. This house was burnt down by the Great Fire, and the present building erected on its site by the members; the doctors still dine together in a room adjoining the court, on every court day. The admission of doctors to practise as advocates is a statutory ceremony: the new member is led up the court by two senior advocates, with the mace borne in front, and there being much bowing and reading of Latin speeches. The number of advocates is twenty-six, and the difference of dress among them marks them either as Cambridge or Oxford men. The proctors, who are in effect the solicitors of Doctors' Commons, have to exhibit their attainments in a similar manner, and they can only be admitted by presenting a certificate signed by three advocates and three proctors,

stating their fitness. The dress of the unengaged advocates is scarlet and ermine, and that of the proctors ermine and black.

CLARA, fair, pretty, and accomplished. Respondent must be tall, dark, and have a moderate income.

IDA MAY, twenty-one, fair, and would make a good wife.

FORGET-ME-NOT, twenty-six, tall, and good looking. Respondent must be honest, industrious, fond of home, and respectably connected.

FRED B., 21, 5 ft. 7 in., dark, respectable, and fond of home. Respondent must be rather tall, pretty, and not more than nineteen.

ANN EDITH, (a widow), fifty, of medium height, fair, good tempered, and an excellent cook. Respondent must have a moderate income, and be fond of home.

CLARA B., 20, a brunette, tall, good looking, graceful, musical, has 300l. a-year. Respondent must be about twenty-four, and in good circumstances.

FANNY, twenty, tall, dark, and good looking. Respondent must be respectable, steady, and about twenty-three. A policeman preferred.

LOUISA, twenty-one, tall, and fair. Respondent must be steady, and about twenty-three. A policeman preferred.

S. L., thirty-five, a widow, tall, dark, considered good looking; no inebriance. Respondent must be a mechanic or tradesman, steady, has no objection to children.

ROSE, (a Jewess), eighteen, tall, dark, good looking, fond of home. Respondent must be respectable, in good circumstances, and of her own persuasion. Would like carte de visite.

EMMA and SOPHIA.—"Emma" twenty-two, short, dark brown hair and hazel eyes. Respondent must be tall, and fond of home. "Sophia," twenty-two, tall, dark hair and eyes. Respondent must be good tempered, and fond of home.

POLLY, NELLY, and ALMOND.—"Polly" twenty, considered good looking, and domesticated. "Nelly," good looking, and domesticated. Respondent must be thoroughly respectable. "Almond," eighteen, and very pretty. A tradesman preferred.

ARCHER, middle-aged, a widower, just commenced business. Respondent must be a ladylike person, with a little money, and no objection to take the management of a shop in a very light and clean business. Archer has no objection to a daughter to assist her mother.

ADA and IDA.—"Ada," nineteen, tall, fair, brown hair and eyes, amiable, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, handsome, and from twenty to twenty-five years of age. "Ida," twenty-five, medium height, blue eyes, golden hair, lively, and rather domesticated. Respondent must be tall, good looking, have dark eyes, be affectionate, and about twenty-six.

COBBETT and BRITANNIA.—"Cobbett," forty-seven, tall, dark, a widower, considered good looking, and fond of home. Respondent must be dark, slight, about his own age, domesticated, and have some ready money. "Britannia," forty-five, a widower, good looking, tall, dark, steady, and fond of home. Respondent must be domesticated, and possessed of means.

BLUE-EYED ROSE and LOTTIE DE VILLA.—"Blue-eyed Rose," seventeen, medium height, brown curly hair, dark eyes, amiable, well educated, and a good singer. Respondent must be fair, good tempered, and steady. "Lottie de Villa," eighteen, medium height, dark brown hair, blue eyes, good figure, amiable, and well educated. Respondent must be dark, good looking, steady, fond of home, and have a good income. A teetotaler preferred.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

A SERGEANT IN THE ARMY is responded to by—"A Young Housemaid," and "Jane Gibbs," 27, good tempered, and affectionate.

MINNIE by—"George Garner," twenty-one, a young tradesman, has 200l. in the bank. Would like to exchange cartes de visite.

A YOUNG MAN by—"Lillian May," eighteen, tall, and fair.

A HAPPY SCOTSMAN by—"Ida Mary," twenty, 5 ft., fair, brown hair and eyes.

FANNY, or PRISCI, or JANET by—"Black Prince," twenty-six, medium height, good looking, fond of home, and has 80l. per annum.

LISETTE by—"Abydos," twenty-one, fair, tall, and accomplished; has enough to support a wife.

MINNIE by—"Don Carlos," thirty-nine, a tradesman, worth 450l., besides his trade.

MIRNA by—"William Greville," thirty, 5 ft. 4 in., dark, well educated, and musical; income between 200l. and 300l. at present.

CLAUDE DUVAL by—"Ophelia," twenty, 5 ft. 3 in., short, curly hair, dark brown eyes, rosy cheeks, and very domesticated; and by—"Agnes," seventeen, medium height, dark hair and eyes, very pretty, and fond of home.

J. H. by—"E. J.," a respectable domestic.

MINNIE by—"Augustus Fairleigh," twenty-five, 5 ft. 7 in., has a good business of his own.

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